THE

ICE MAIDEN,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS.

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The Ice Maiden.

I. Little Rudy.

LET us betake ourselves to Switzerland, and wander through the lovely mountain land where the pine woods cling to the sides of precipitous cliffs. We will climb up the glittering white glaciers, and down again to the green meadows through which the leaping streams hurry wildly forward as if they could not reach the sea too soon. The sun burns hot as fire in the low valleys, and on the icy peaks its hot rays melt the masses of hard ice till they sink and swim in rolling avalanches or changing glaciers. Two of these glaciers lie in the wide rocky passes between the Schreckhorn and the Wetterhorn, close to the little town of

Grindelwald. They are wonderful to look upon, and in the summer-time crowds of visitors come to see them from all quarters of the world.

They come across the high snow-clad mountains, and from the deep valleys; and as they climb higher and higher the valley sinks beneath their feet until it looks as it would if it were seen from an air-balloon. Above them, on the mountain peaks, the clouds hang like thick, black veils, while, below in the valleys, where the brown wooden houses lie scattered about among woods and fields, a sunlit patch stands out in brilliant green, as if it were transparent. Below them, the waterfalls leap and roar; above them, they steal with a gentle ripple down the rock, like fluttering silver ribbons.

On each side of the mountain path are wooden houses, each with its plot of potatoes. Not one could afford to be without it, for inside the houses are troops of hungry children who all take kindly to their food. Out they run from every side and gather round the traveller to offer their wares for sale. Every child is a trader already, and offers carved toy-houses, modelled like the

mountain cottages. In rain or sunshine they are always there with their wares.

Some years ago, a little boy used often to be seen among them on the mountain path. He stood apart from the rest, with a serious look in his eyes, and held his wooden toys tightly in both hands, as if he were very loth to let them go. Either on account of his grave, childish face, or because he was so very young, he was often noticed by the strangers who passed that way, and he sold more goods than any other child, without knowing why. Higher up in the mountain lived his grandfather, the old wood-carver. It was he who carved the dainty toy-houses, and in his large press at home there was a multitude of such toys. Nut-crackers, knives and forks, and glove-boxes, all of them covered with carved leaves, or grasses, or with the chamois flying from the hunter. It was a feast for children's eyes; but Rudy was fonder of the old gun which rested on the beams close to the ceiling: his grandfather had promised that he should have it for his own, but not yet—not till he had grown strong and able to handle it.

Young as the boy was, he had learned to

mind the goats; and if ever there was a good goatherd in all the land, it was little Rudy. He climbed even higher than the goats themselves, for he liked to reach the birds' nests in the tall trees on the mountain. He was a fearless child; but he never played with other children, and scarcely ever smiled, except when he stood by the roaring waterfall, or heard the avalanche thunder down some mountain chasm. The only time he met the other children was when his grandfather sent him down to offer his wood-carvings for sale. Rudy did not like the task; he loved to wander alone among the mountains, or to listen to his grandfather's stories about old times. He heard of the people in Meyringen, where he was born: the Meyringen folk said his grandfather had not lived there always; they had wandered thither from the far north; the earliest settlers were called Swedes. Rudy was very proud of knowing so much; but he learned still more from his other companions, and he had plenty of companions in the house. First came the great dog Ajola, which belonged to Rudy's father; and next came the tom-cat. Rudy had a profound respect for the cat, for

it was he who had taught him how to climb.

"Come out on the roof with me, Rudy," the cat had said to him. He spoke quite clearly and distinctly, and Rudy understood him in a moment, for when children are too young to speak for themselves they have no difficulty in understanding all that the ducks and cats and dogs say. Of course that is only when they are quite little things, just at that age when their grandfather's stick is a fiery, neighing horse with flowing mane and tail. Some children keep this knowledge longer than others, and then everybody says that they are extremely babyish, and very backward for their age. What things people will say to be sure!

"Come out on the roof with me, Rudy," was the first thing he heard the cat say. "It is all nonsense about falling off," continued the bold animal; "people don't fall if they are not afraid. Come along! Set your paw down like this—now your other; feel your way with your fore-paws. Keep your eyes open, of course, and your limbs supple. If you come to a cleft, jump over it as I do. Look!"

And Rudy learned his lesson. He and the cat would often sit side-by-side upon the roof or the branches of the trees; and after a while Rudy went where the cat would not go—along the extreme ledges of the precipice.

He often climbed to the mountain top before the sun had risen and drank his morning draught of the fresh mountain air, the draught mixed by God Himself, and towards which all that men can do is only to read the written recipe—the fresh scent of the mountain herbs, mint, and wild thyme. All the close, heavy vapours are sucked up by the clouds, and the wind blows them away over the pine woods; the spirit of the fragrance becomes pure, rarefied air, and that was Rudy's morning draught.

The blessed sunbeams kissed his cheek; the evil spirit Dizziness stood lurking near, but dared not approach him. The swallows, out of the seven nests round his grandfather's house, flew round him, singing, "We and you—we and you!" They brought him friendly messages from all at home, even from the two hens, the only birds with whom Rudy never associated.

Child as he was, he had already travelled,

and travelled rather a long journey. He was born in Canton Valais, and had been carried to Grindelwald across the mountains. Not very long ago, too, he had walked to the Staubbach, and seen it trembling like a veil of silver gauze against the dazzling whiteness of the Jungfrau. And he had stood on the great glacier at Grindelwald—but that was a sorrowful story. It was there that his mother met her death, and all Rudy's baby-merriment had been frozen and stilled for ever. "When the lad was not twelve months old," said his grandfather, "he laughed oftener than he cried; but after he had lain in the ice-cleft it seemed as though a thorough change passed over him." The old man seldom spoke of these things, but the whole canton knew about them.

Rudy's father had been a postilion; the great dog, Ajola, always went with him on his journeys across the Simplon to the lake of Geneva. In the Rhone valley, in Canton Valais, Rudy had some relations on his father's side; his uncle lived there, and was well-known as a famous guide and chamois hunter. Rudy was only a year old when he lost his father; and his mother was anxious

to take her baby home to her friends in the Bernese Oberland. In the month of June she started homewards across the Gemmi pass, in the company of two chamois hunters. They had travelled more than half way over the high peak in the snow fields, her native town was clearly in sight, with all its wooden houses—there was only the great glacier to cross. The snow had newly fallen and hid a cleft that split the ice, not very far down, but still lower than the height of a man. A stream of icy water rushed through it; and into this cleft the young mother sank silently, without one shrick or cry for aid. Nothing was heard but the faint wail of a little child. More than an hour passed away before the two guides could procure ropes and poles from the neighbouring houses, and, after many attempts, two bodies were drawn up out of the crevice. Every means of restoration was tried, and in a little while the baby breathed again, but the mother was past all human help. And so it happened that the old grandfather received into his house at Grindelwald only a poor little orphan child who cried oftener than he laughed, and who seemed to have left all his smiles behind

him in the frozen ice cleft. The change must have come upon him in the cold, unearthly chasm, where, as the Swiss peasants say, "The souls of the lost are imprisoned till the Judgment Day."

There lies the glacier, like a rushing torrent arrested at full speed and frozen into glassy blocks of green, transparent ice, pile upon pile; beneath it flow the streams of melted ice and snow among caves, vaults, and shining corridors. It is a strange and wondrous palace—the home of the ice maiden, the glacier queen. Fatal and destructive spirit, child of the air and ruler of the mountain streams, the ice maiden can outrun the chamois on the mountain peaks, where the boldest climber must cut his way step by step. She sails on slender pine stems across the roaring waterfalls, and springs from precipice to precipice, with her long white hair streaming in the breeze and her green robe flying round her, with the changeful opal tints of the mountain lakes.

"Mine is the power to crush and kill," she cried. "They have stolen from me a beautiful boy—a child whom I have kissed, but have not kissed to death. He is back among

his kind, tending his goats upon the mountain heights. But he shall not escape me. I will claim him yet, for he is mine!"

She called up her evil spirit Dizziness, and bade him act for her; for the ice maiden could not bear the sultry summer air of the valleys and the scent of mint and thyme. Dizziness came up at her call, he and his brothers, for there are many of them. Some of them sit on staircases and balustrades, some run like squirrels along the mountain edge, some tread the air as the swimmer cleaves the sea, and lure their victims down into the abyss. These spirits and their queen clutch at human beings as the polypus clutches at everything which comes in its reach. The ice maiden chose out the strongest spirit, and bade him seize Rudy.

"Oh, yes!" said the spirit; "seize *him?* That is easier said than done. That monster of a cat has taught him all her tricks. And he has a power of his own that drives me from him. I cannot touch the boy. Often, when he is leaning over the precipice, I long to tickle the soles of his feet and send him head over heels into the abyss; but I never can manage it."

"It shall be done," said the ice maiden, "either by you or by me."

"No, no!" cried voices, echoing softly among the mountains like the chime of church bells. The voices were those of other spirits, good and kind, who wish well to human beings—the spirits of the sunshine. They encamp every night along the mountain peaks, and spread wide their rosy wings; the sunset falls upon them in all its glory, and people call it the Alpine glow.

When the sun has set they sleep in the soft, white snow, and appear again in the morning. They are fond of flowers and butterflies and human beings, and, among the latter, they loved Rudy most of all.

"You shall not seize him!" they cried.

"I have seized on stronger than he," answered the ice maiden.

Then the spirits of the sunshine sang the old song about the traveller from whom the stormwind vainly tried to take his cloak. "You may seize him, perhaps, but you will not be able to hold him fast," they said, "for he is stronger even than we. He will one day rise higher than the sun, our mother; and he knows the magic word which compels wind

and wave to serve his will. You can but loose the heavy burden from him, he will rise high above your grasp."

So sang the spirits, in clear, bell-like chorus.

Every morning the sunbeams stole in through Rudy's window-pane and kissed his cheek. They tried to melt away the icy kisses which the glacier queen had given him as he lay on his dead mother's breast, before he was saved as by a miracle.

II. The Journey to the New Home.

Rudy was now eight years old; his uncle, who lived in the Rhone valley, wished to have the boy sent to him, that he might begin to learn something and have a better chance of getting on in the world. His old grandfather saw the sense of that and let him go.

So Rudy said good-bye. Not to his grandfather only; there was Ajola, the old dog.

"Your father was a postilion, and I was his dog," said Ajola. "We have travelled about a good deal together; I knew most of the dogs and men across the mountains. I never was a great talker, but now that we

have so short a time to spend together I shall say rather more than usual. I will tell you a story that has puzzled me all my life. I have been thinking over it for a long time past—I may say that I have pondered the matter deeply. I do not understand it, and neither will you; but that is of no consequence. One thing I *have* made clear, and that is that things are not equally divided in this world, either for dogs or men. It is not every one who is born to be nursed and lap milk; I have not found it to be my case, but I once met a kind of a dog who was driving along in a post-chaise, where he or she sat on a cushion, like a human being. The lady, its mistress, had a bottle of milk with her, out of which this dog was fed; it was then offered some sugar-cakes, at which it merely sniffed, and did not condescend to eat, so its mistress ate them herself. I, meanwhile, was running by the side of the carriage, hungry as a dog can be, and chewing the cud of my own thoughts for want of anything better. It seemed to me that things were not quite as they ought to be, in more ways than one. Should you like to be nursed and drive in a coach? I heartily hope you may; but you will not be able to attain to it by your own merits.

I have not attained to it myself, neither by barking nor by howling."

That was Ajola's story. Rudy kissed him and bade him farewell. Then he took the cat in his arms, who tried hard to get away.

"You are getting too strong for me," said the cat; "and I do not care to make use of my claws against you. Climb away over the mountains. I have taught you the way. Never think it possible that you can fall, and you will stand anywhere."

With that the cat jumped down, for he was too proud to let Rudy see that he was ready to cry at parting.

The hens were strutting about the yard; one of them had had her tail shot off by a traveller, who thought himself a fine sportsman. The man had taken the fowl for a bird of prey.

"Rudy is going to wander over the mountain," said the hen.

"He is always in such a hurry," said the other. "I do not like leave-takings," and away they walked.

Then Rudy said good-bye to the goats; they bleated piteously, and wanted to come with him. It was a sad parting.

Two trusty guides, who were going to cross

the Gemmi pass, took charge of Rudy. It was a long walk for such a little boy, but he was a good walker, and had plenty of courage.

The swallows flew with him a little way: "We and you, you and we!" Their path lay across the foaming Lutschine, which breaks forth in myriad tiny streams from the Grindelwald glacier. Trunks of fallen trees and blocks of stone served as bridges. When they had reached the alder forest they began to ascend the mountain where the glacier had loosened itself from the mountain side; and now they began to cross the glacier itself. Rudy was sometimes obliged to crawl on his hands and knees; his eyes sparkled with joy, and he trod so firmly in his iron-clasped shoes that it seemed as if he wished to leave the trace of his every footstep. The black earth, which the mountain stream had scattered on the glacier, gave it a weather beaten look, but the glassy, blue-green ice showed through it all the same. There were small ice bound pools to wander round, and as the travellers edged past them one heavy stone that was rocking on the brink of the abyss lost its balance and fell, thundering, down, and sent up a thousand echoes from the ravine below.

On they climbed, higher and higher; the glacier stretched upwards like a frozen river, hemmed in by jagged cliffs. Rudy remembered for a moment the story he had heard of his own fall into the ice cleft when he was a baby; how he had lain in his mother's arms in the cold, death-like snow. But the thought passed away; the tale seemed only one among many such that he had heard. Now and then the men thought that the path was too difficult for the child, and held out a helping hand towards him, but he was not afraid, and stood like a chamois on the slippery ice. Sometimes their path lay between bare grey stones, sometimes among the pine woods, or across the sunlit meadows; every moment the landscape changed around them, but the three great mountain peaks were ever before their eyes—every child can tell their names—the Jungfrau, the Monk, and the Eiger. Rudy had never climbed so high before; the snow lay round him like a boundless sea, and from time to time the wind tossed away a flake from its swelling waves, as it blew off the foam from the crest of the breakers. The glaciers here lie close together; the palaces of the ice maiden, whose power

is used to crush and to destroy. The sun shone warm; the dazzling snow was sprinkled over with blue diamond-like sparks. Countless numbers of bees and butterflies lay dead upon the snow. Either they had ventured too high or the wind had blown them to the spot where the bitter cold killed them. A threatening cloud, swollen with the Föhn, hung like a ball of black wool round the Wetterhorn. Rudy never lost the memory of this journey —of the night quarters on the mountain peak, and of the rushing water which, working through ages that make one giddy only to think upon, saws through and conquers the massive stone.

A lonely stone building gave them shelter for the night; a fire was soon lighted with fir cones and dry wood; the guides sat round it smoking their pipes and drinking hot spiced wine. Little Rudy drank some with them, and listened to their tales of the mysterious beings of the mountain peaks; of the gigantic water-snakes which haunt the frozen lakes; the nightly band of spectres who carry the sleeping stranger on to the floating city of Venice; the wild shepherd who leads his black sheep across the meadows. If they

had not seen him, they had heard the faint, unearthly tinkle of his sheep-bells. Rudy listened eagerly, but without a thrill of fear; and as he listened he thought he heard the hollow, ghostly sound. It drew nearer; the guides heard it also; they stopped in their story, and told Rudy he must not go to sleep.

It was the Föhn, the stormy south wind, that rushes down from the mountain heights, snapping the great trees asunder like so many reeds, and carrying the wooden cottages across the flood just as one moves a piece on a chessboard.

By-and-by they told Rudy that the danger was over, and he might go to sleep. Tired out with his long walk, the child slept at once, at the first word of command.

The next morning they set out again. The sun lit up new mountains and new valleys for Rudy to see. They were now in Canton Valais, beyond the mountain chain one sees from Grindelwald. The boy saw other clefts, other mountain passes, and other men. But what men they were! Misshapen forms, weird, yellow faces, with unsightly swellings disfiguring the throat—he saw the Crétins,

as they dragged themselves wearily along and stared at the strangers with vacant eyes. Were all the people like this in his new home?

III. Rudy's Uncle.

Heaven be praised! the people in his uncle's house looked like those whom the child had left behind, except indeed poor Saperli. Saperli was a poor, forsaken Crétin of weak intellect, who wandered about the canton and was sheltered for a while in every house, and Rudy happened to find him at his uncle's when he arrived there after his journey.

His uncle was a famous hunter, and carried on a cooper's business as well. His aunt was a lively little Frenchwoman, with a bird-like face, eagle eyes, and a long, yellow neck.

Everything was new to Rudy: dress, manners, and language, but the child soon caught up the last. The home was better furnished and larger than his grandfather's cottage. The rooms were lofty; antlers and polished fowling-pieces ornamented the walls; over the door was an image of the Virgin, before which stood a

burning lamp and a nosegay of fresh Alpine roses.

Rudy's uncle was not only a successful hunter; he was one of the best guides. The child was now the pet of the household; before he came it was the old, blind hound who was everybody's favourite. The dog was too old to hunt now, but his master remembered his past services, and the dog was cared for and caressed like one of the family. Rudy stroked him, but the old hound did not like strangers. Before long, however, they were fast friends, and Rudy was made free of house and home.

"It is not a bad place, our Canton Valais," said his uncle; "we have plenty of chamois, they do not die out so fast as the wild goats; and it is better here now than it used to be. Let people praise bygone days as much as they please, our own times are the best. The sack is open; a current of fresh air passes through our valley. When a worn-out thing falls to pieces, something better comes to take its place." When his uncle was in a talking mood, he would speak of his own youth and of his father before him, when Valais was, as he called it, a tied-

up sackful of wretched, sick people, miserable Crétins. "The French soldiers were the best doctors," he said; "they killed the disease and the patients too. The French know how to conquer in more ways than one, and so do the Frenchwomen also." With that the hunter laughed and nodded at his wife, who was a Frenchwoman born and bred. "And they can conquer the stone also," he continued. "They made the Simplon pass through the solid rock; and what a path it is! I might say to a little three-year-old child, 'Go down to Italy; keep on the high road,' and the child would get there without fail if it only did as it was bid." And then the hunter sang a French song, and cried, "Hurrah! Long live Napoleon!"

This was the first time that Rudy had heard of France, and of Lyons, the great town on the Rhone, where his uncle had been.

It was not long before Rudy also became an agile chamois hunter: he had the making of it in him, his uncle said. He learned how to handle a gun and to shoot at a mark; and his uncle made him drink the warm blood of a chamois, a draught which preserves him who drinks it from ever feeling giddy. He

learned, too, to know the times at which the avalanches fell from the different mountains, in the morning or in the evening, just as the sun's rays caught them. He studied the firm, agile spring of the chamois; and where there was no foothold he learned to steady himself by his elbows, and to cling with his back and the muscles of his loins. The chamois are wise, and post sentries; the hunter must be wiser still and never cross their scent. He must perplex and mislead them. One day Rudy saw his uncle hang his hat and cloak upon a stick, and the chamois took it for a man.

The mountain path was narrow, a mere ledge along the yawning precipice. The half-melted snow crumbled the rock, and the stones fell at every step. Rudy watched while his uncle crept along the ledge on his face; the loose pieces of rock fell one by one into the measureless depths below. Rudy was standing on a projecting point of rock about a hundred paces behind his uncle; suddenly he saw a great eagle circling in the air above the unconscious hunter, and poising above him, ready to swoop down and plunge with him to the abyss. The hunter's

eyes were fixed upon the chamois; Rudy saw nothing but the eagle; he knew what the bird wanted, and he kept his gun ready to take aim. At the moment the chamois made a spring the hunter fired, and the animal fell dead. Her young one fled away, as if it had passed through a life of fear and flight. Frightened by the noise, the great eagle flew swiftly away, and the hunter knew nothing of his danger till he learned it from Rudy.

They turned towards home in the highest spirits, the hunter whistling a song as he went. Suddenly a strange sound was heard; they looked round; yonder, on the rocky heights, the snow heaved and rose in great waves, as a sheet of white linen heaves when the wind passes under it.

The snow waves broke up and changed from firm marble slabs into rushing, foaming torrents, with a sullen roar like a muffled sound of thunder. It was an avalanche falling, not upon Rudy and his uncle, but near them—alas! much too near them.

"Hold fast, Rudy," shouted his uncle; "cling with all your might."

Rudy clung to the nearest tree, and his uncle climbed up into the branches. The

avalanche thundered down beside them; but the stormwing that spreads out from it on either side caught the tree to which they were clinging, and snapped it in two, like a dry reed. Rudy lay safe upon the earth, but his uncle was hurled far away; and the boy found him, beneath the jagged branches, with his hands still warm, but his kind face crushed out of human form. Rudy stood pale and trembling under the first shock of his life and its first thrill of fear.

Late at night he reached home with his terrible message. The poor wife did not utter a cry or shed a tear till they carried her husband's body into the house, and then her grief broke out in tears and sobs. The Crétin crept away to his bed and hid there for two days. On the third day he came to Rudy.

"Write a letter for me," he said. "Saperli cannot write. Saperli can take it to the post."

"A letter for you?" said Rudy. "To whom?"

"To the Lord Christ."

"To whom do you say?"

The Crétin folded his hands, looked implor-

ingly at Rudy, and answered, solemnly, "To Jesus Christ. Saperli wants to send Him a letter; and beg that Saperli may die, and not the master in the house here!"

Rudy pressed his hand. "The letter will not bring the master back," he said. But it was no easy task to make the Crétin believe him.

"Now you must be our support," said the widow to Rudy. And the boy fulfilled his task.

IV. Babette.

Who is the best shot in Canton Valais? The chamois had found that out long ago. "Beware of Rudy!" they said, one to another. Who is the handsomest hunter in the canton? "Rudy," answered the young girls; and *they* did not say "Beware of Rudy." Their careful mothers did not say so either, for Rudy was as polite to them as he was to the young girls. How merry and bold he was! His cheeks were sun-burnt, his teeth pearly white, his hair black and wavy; he was a handsome youth, and just twenty

years old. The icy water could not harm him when he swam the lakes; he could turn and twist about like a fish; he was the best climber in all the district, and could cling like a snail to the sides of the cliff. His muscles and sinews never failed him at his leaps, and he did credit to his teachers, the cat and the chamois.

Rudy was the best guide; every one had confidence in him, and he might easily have made his fortune, but he had no liking for the work, nor for his uncle's trade; his whole delight was fixed in chamois hunting. There was plenty of money to be earned by a skilful hunter, and every one said that Rudy would be a good match if he did not look too high. He was certainly a good dancer; the young girls dreamed of him, and some of them thought of him even when they were awake.

"Rudy kissed me in the dance," said Annette, the schoolmaster's daughter, to her dearest friend. She ought not to have said so, not even to her dearest friend. Such secrets cannot be kept; they are like sand in a sieve; and before long every one knew that Rudy, brave and good as he was, had

kissed some one in the dance. But he had not kissed the one he loved the best.

"Oh, Rudy!" said an old hunter; "he has kissed Annette, and now he has begun with A, he will go on through the whole alphabet."

This kiss was the utmost that the gossips could find to reproach him with, and it had not been given to the maiden of his heart.

Down in the valley near Bex lived the rich miller. The mill stood near the rushing stream, the house—a large building three storeys high, with little turrets, and its roof of wood and tin, which glittered in the sunlight—was sheltered by two great walnut trees. On the highest turret was a weathercock, an apple transfixed by an arrow, in memory of Tell's famous shot. The mill was picturesque, and found plenty to paint it and write about it; but the miller's daughter allowed no one to paint her or to write about her. At least that was Rudy's firm belief. She was painted clearly in his heart, and her blue eyes had kindled a fire there —a fire which had flamed out suddenly, as most fires do. The strangest thing was, that the pretty Babette knew nothing at

years old. The icy water could not harm him when he swam the lakes; he could turn and twist about like a fish; he was the best climber in all the district, and could cling like a snail to the sides of the cliff. His muscles and sinews never failed him at his leaps, and he did credit to his teachers, the cat and the chamois.

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Down in the valley near Bex lived the rich miller. The mill stood near the rushing stream, the house—a large building three storeys high, with little turrets, and its roof of wood and tin, which glittered in the sunlight—was sheltered by two great walnut trees. On the highest turret was a weathercock, an apple transfixed by an arrow, in memory of Tell's famous shot. The mill was picturesque, and found plenty to paint it and write about it; but the miller's daughter allowed no one to paint her or to write about her. At least that was Rudy's firm belief. She was painted clearly in his heart, and her blue eyes had kindled a fire there—a fire which had flamed out suddenly, as most fires do. The strangest thing was, that the pretty Babette knew nothing at

all about it: she and Rudy had never spoken a word to each other.

The miller was rich, and therefore Babette was not easily to be won. But there is nothing too high to be reached when one knows how to climb, and no one falls unless he is afraid. Rudy had learned that lesson long ago.

Now, it happened that Rudy had some business to transact in Bex. It was quite a journey then, for the railway was not opened. The broad valley stretches away from the Rhone glacier along the foot of the Simplon, between myriad mountain peaks, and through it rushes the beautiful Rhone. Too often the river overflows its bed and carries destruction to the meadow lands and *châlets* on its banks. Between Sion and St. Maurice the valley bends like an elbow, and beyond St. Maurice it narrows till there is only room for the river and a road wide enough to let a single carriage pass. An old tower stands by the roadside as guardian of the valley, for there the Canton Valais ends and Canton Vaud begins. Across the bridge you see the custom house of the frontier, and the next town beyond is Bex. The country is

rich and luxuriant: a perfect garden of walnut and chestnut trees, now and then a crypess or a pomegranate tree is seen among them; and the air is as warm as if one were in Italy.

Rudy arrived in Bex and finished his business. He then walked about the town a little; but he did not see even a miller's boy, much less Babette. That was not as it should be.

Evening drew on; the air was heavy with the scent of wild thyme and lime blossoms; a faint blue mist veiled the wooded mountain sides; deep silence reigned over all. Not a chill, deathlike silence, but the hush of perfect rest; it was as if Nature was holding her breath while her photograph was being taken on the blue background of the sky. Here and there stiff telegraph posts stood among the green trees in the meadow, and against one of these a figure was leaning —motionless as the post itself. It was Rudy, silent as the landscape round him. For all that he was not asleep, much less dead. The telegraph wires are silent, even when news that will rouse the world is flying through them; and at this moment thoughts

of life and death to Rudy—plans for the happiness of his whole life—were flying through his brain. His eyes were fixed on the twinkling light that came and went through the leaves round the miller's window. He stood so still that you would have thought he was watching a chamois—or, rather, he himself was the chamois, for it will stand for hours together as if carved out of the rock, till suddenly a stone falls and it flies away; and just then a thought fell across Rudy's brain, and he started up at last.

"Never despair!" he cried. "A visit to the mill will be the thing. 'Good evening, miller—good evening, Babette!' A man never falls unless he is afraid, and Babette must see me sometime, if I am ever to be her husband."

Rudy laughed and walked up to the mill in good spirits; he knew what he wanted this time. Nothing less than Babette.

The river rushed on above its yellowish bed; willows and linden trees hung over the foaming waters. Rudy struck into the path that led to the miller's house. But, as the children sing—

"The door was shut, the folk were gone:
The cat sat on the step alone!"

"Mew!" said the cat, setting up her back and rubbing herself against the door. But Rudy had forgotten the cat's language. He knocked at the door; no one heard him, so no one answered. "Mew!" said the cat. When Rudy was a little child he would have understood in a moment that the cat was telling him that no one was at home. As it was, he was obliged to go and make inquiries at the mill; and there he learned that the miller and Babette were gone to the grand shooting match at Interlachen. The ccntest was to begin on the next day, and to last through the week; visitors from all the German cantons were expected.

Poor Rudy! he certainly had not chosen a lucky day for his visit to Bex; all he could do now was to go back again; and so he did, across St. Maurice and Sion to his native valley. But he was not cast down; when the sun rose on the following day his good temper had been up long before, if indeed it had ever set.

"Babette is in Interlachen," he said to himself; "many a long day's journey from here if one goes by the highway, but not nearly so long if one goes right across the

mountains. I know the way from my earliest childhood. And there is a shooting match going on! I will be first among the shooters; and I could not have a better place in which to make Babette's acquaintance."

Rudy made for the Gemmi pass. His light knapsack, in which was all his Sunday bravery, was slung across his shoulders; he carried his gun and hunting-pouch, and entered the pass, intending to descend at Grindelwald. Even then he had no trifling distance to go; but the match had only just begun; and the miller and Babette were going to stay with their friends in Interlachen till all the gaieties were over.

Joyously Rudy marched along in the fresh, bracing mountain air; the valley sank beneath him, the horizon widened, first one snow-peak rose before him, then another, and then the whole mountain chain of glittering snow-white Alps. He knew every peak, and made straight for the Schreckhorn, which stood lifting up its finger of whitened stone high in the blue air.

At length the brow of the chain was crossed; the grassy tracts sloped downwards towards his native valley; around him were

trees and flowers rich with the lavish wealth of beauty; and in his heart there was the unclouded joy of youth, which will know nothing either of old age or of death, and proudly claims to live, to rule, and to enjoy. He felt free as the birds of the air. The swallows circled round him and sang as they had sung of old. "We and you! we and you!" All was freedom and gladness.

Below him lay the green velvet of the meadows with their houses of brown wood, among which the Lutschinen leaped and tumbled. He saw the two glaciers with their glass-green edges and discoloured snow; and he looked fearlessly into the deep cracks and crevices. The church bells rang out a welcome to him, and made his heart beat so loud with old memories that for a moment Babette herself was forgotten.

He trod once more the mountain path where he had stood when he was a little boy and offered toys for sale. Yonder, behind the pine trees, he saw his grandfather's house. Strangers were living there now; and other children came to meet him, offering him their wood-carvings and flowers. One of them offered him an Alpine rose. Rudy accepted

it as a good omen; and his thoughts flew back to Babette. He crossed the bridge where the two Lutschinen meet, the foliage was thicker, and the walnut trees cast a pleasant shadow. Now he saw the waving flags, the white cross on a red ground—the flag of the Dane and of the Swede. Interlachen lay at his feet.

"Can there be a prettier sight in the world," thought Rudy, "than a Swiss town in holiday dress?" It was not in the least like any other town—a compact, symmetrical mass of grand stone houses—no, it looked as if the pretty brown houses had run down of their own free will from the mountain into the valley, and grouped themselves on either side of the swift, arrowy river, in self-willed fashion, rather irregular and in and out, but making a pretty street for all that. The finest street has grown into existence since Rudy's childhood; it seemed to him as if all the toy-houses in his grandfather's chest had been planted in a row and had grown to full-size, like the ancient chestnut trees. Every house was an hotel, with projecting roof and delicately carved front; and between it and the street was a garden ablaze with

flowers and sparkling with fountains. There were no buildings on the other side of the street, so that nothing interposed to hide from view the soft, green meadow lands through which the cows wandered, tinkling their bells, or the mountain chain, which parted and fell back a little in the centre, as if to let every one see, in all its brilliant loveliness, the snow-clad steeps of the Jungfrau.

What a multitude of finely-dressed ladies and gentlemen filled the streets! and what a throng of Swiss from every canton. Every marksman wore in his cap a ticket, on which was written the number of successful shots which he had made. There was plenty of noise and bustle, music singing and trumpet blowing. All the houses were decorated with flags, flowers, and mottoes of every kind. Crack! crack! went the shots. That was the best music, Rudy thought. In the excitement of the scene he nearly forgot Babette and the cause which had brought him thither.

He soon found his way to the marksmen, and his shot never once failed to hit the very centre of the mark.

"Who is that young stranger?" the people asked each other. "He speaks French as if he came from Valais, but his German is very good also."

"He lived at Grindelwald when he was a child," said one of the old huntsmen.

The dark-eyed stranger was full of life and spirit; his eye and his arm were both of them sure and true. Courage gives success, and Rudy had always plenty of courage. Very soon he was the centre of an admiring circle, murmurs of applause met his ears on every side; Babette had vanished from his thoughts. A heavy hand fell on his shoulder, and a voice said to him, in French, "You come from Canton Valais, don't you?"

Rudy turned round and saw a broad, red face smiling pleasantly on him. It was the rich miller from Bex, and hidden behind his portly form was the slender figure of Babette, and her soft, bright eyes. The miller from Valais was proud that it was a man from his own canton who had carried off prize after prize. Rudy must certainly have been a Sunday child, for the very people whom he had come to meet, and had forgotten, were now making the first advances to him,

When two neighbours meet in this way among strangers acquaintanceship is soon struck up between them. Rudy was the first marksman at the shooting match; the miller was the first man at Bex, thanks to his money and his good mill. The two men shook hands for the first time, and then Babette held out her little hand, with a true-hearted smile. Rudy held it so long that she coloured as red as a rose.

The miller spoke of their journey and of the towns they had passed through; in his opinion they had travelled an immense distance, for they had come by rail, and steamboat, and coach.

"I chose a shorter road," said Rudy. "I crossed the mountains. There is no path too high to be crossed."

"Not if you don't mind breaking your neck," said the miller. "And you look just the one to do that, some day or other, out of sheer recklessness."

"Oh, people need never fall if they make up their minds that they won't," said Rudy.

The miller's relation, in whose house he was staying, invited Rudy to come in, for he also was born in Canton Valais. The young

man took the invitation as a good omen, and a sign that Fortune was in his favour—and so she always is to those who think for themselves, and who remember that, though she gives us nuts, she does not crack them for us.

Rudy sat among the guests as if he were one of the family; healths were drunk in his honour; Babette clinked her glass with the rest, and Rudy returned thanks for the honour.

Towards evening they walked down the beautiful new street in front of the hotels. There was such a crowd of people walking to and fro under the tall chestnut trees, that Rudy was obliged to offer Babette his arm. He was so glad to have met such kind friends, he said—Vaud and Valais were always good neighbours; it was almost like one canton. He spoke with such warmth that Babette could not help pressing his hand. They walked side by side as if they were old acquaintances; Babette chattered merrily, and Rudy liked to hear her laugh at the affected manners and wonderful dresses of the foreign visitors. She did not laugh from ill-nature, but from sheer lightness of heart, for

she knew that some, at least, of the strangers were good and noble people. She told Rudy about her English godmother, a great lady, who, eighteen years ago, when Babette was christened, had stood sponsor for her in Bex, and gave her the beautiful brooch she was wearing then. She had written twice to her godmother, and this year she would very likely meet her and her two daughters. The daughters were old maids, nearly thirty, said Babette—Babette was just eighteen.

The pretty little mouth was never still for an instant, and all that it said seemed to Rudy to be of the highest importance. He, too, told her many things; among others, he told her how often he had been to Bex, and how many times he had seen her when she thought little of it. He spoke of the last visit he had paid to the mill, with many thoughts in his heart that he could not explain at present, and how, when he heard that she and her father were gone to Interlachen, he thought the way was not so long that one could not climb over the mountain wall and shorten it.

Yes, he said all that, and more besides; he told her that it was for her sake, and not

to join in the shooting match, that he had come to Interlachen!

Babette was silent; it seemed to her that he had said too much, and that she had listened too long.

As they wandered on the sun set behind the Alps, and the Jungfrau stood out in splendour, framed in rich green woodlands. Every one stopped to look at the beautiful sight.

"Nothing can be more beautiful than this!" said Babette.

"Nothing?" said Rudy, looking into her face. "I must go home," he said, a few moments later.

"Come and see us in Bex," whispered Babette; "my father will be pleased to see you."

V. The Homeward Journey.

Oh, what a number of things Rudy had to carry as he made his way home across the mountains! Three silver cups, two beautiful guns and a silver coffee-pot: the coffee-pot would be very useful in case he wanted to set up housekeeping. And he carried something else, or it carried him, homewards—

something higher and better than his prizes. The weather was dull and stormy, with grey skies and heavy rain; the shining mountain peaks had disappeared beneath a veil of black crape. The last sounds of the axe came from the valley below, and the tree stems rolled down the slopes: seen from above, the stately trunks looked like thin, dry sticks. The Lutschine rushed on with its monotonous roar. The wind rose higher, and the clouds sailed fast. Suddenly a young maiden stood at Rudy's side; he had not noticed her till she was close to him: she also was going to cross the pass. In the maiden's eyes lay a strange, mysterious power; they were clear as glass, and fathomless in their wondrous depth.

"Have you a lover?" asked Rudy, for his head was full of such thoughts just then.

"No," said the maiden, "not one!" and she laughed as if the answer was not true. "Do not let us go all this way round," she said: "turn to the left, that is the shorter way."

"It is the shortest way to fall into an ice cleft," said Rudy. "Do you pretend to be a guide, and yet know no better than that?"

"I know the way," said the maiden, "and my thoughts are clear, but yours are wandering down in the valley. On the mountain heights you should think of the ice maiden: she has no love for human beings; at least, men say so."

"I am not afraid of her," said Rudy. "She was obliged to give me up when I was a child, and I am not going back to her now that I am a man."

The darkness increased, the rain fell fast, and the snow flakes whirled through the air.

"Give me your hand," said the maiden. "I can help you;" and Rudy felt himself touched by ice-cold fingers.

"You help me!" he cried. "I do not want a woman's help in climbing." He stepped forward more quickly; the snow-storm closed him round; the wind howled, and behind him he heard the maiden singing—it sounded weird and strange in the stormy night. "It must be a spirit in the service of the ice maiden," thought Rudy: he had heard of such things when he was a boy and passed the night here, with the two guides, on his way to Valais.

The snow fell lighter, the clouds lay below

him; he looked back, but there was no one to be seen. The sounds of the strange, unearthly laughter followed him yet.

But when he reached the spot where the path slopes downwards toward the Rhone valley, he saw above Chamouni a strip of clear blue sky, in which two lovely stars were shining. They glowed and trembled, and Rudy thought of his fortune and of Babette, and the thoughts drove away the cold.

VI. The Visit to the Mill.

"You have brought some splendid things home with you!" said his aunt. Her queer little bird-like eyes sparkled, and she twisted her long neck about in a wonderful way. "You are a lucky boy, Rudy," she said; "I must really give you a kiss."

Rudy let himself be kissed; but his face showed that he looked on the performance as a mild domestic penance.

"What a handsome lad you are, Rudy!" said the little woman.

"I don't see it," said Rudy, laughing; but he was pleased, for all that.

"I can tell you again," said his aunt, "you have luck on your side."

"You may be right on that point," said Rudy; and he thought of Babette.

"They must be at home by this time," he said to himself. "It is two days beyond the time they mentioned. I must go down to Bex."

Never had he felt such a longing for the lovely valley. He went to Bex, and they were at home this time. Rudy was well received, and the miller gave him many kind messages from his friends in Interlachen. Babette was very silent, but her eyes spoke, and Rudy was quite contented. And even the miller, who generally liked to keep all the conversation to himself, and was accustomed to have every one laughing at his puns and jokes, seemed to prefer for once to let Rudy speak and listen to the young man's tales of his adventures in the chase. Rudy spoke of the dangers which the hunter had to brave on the mountain heights, how he was forced to crawl along the perilous ledge of snow and over the half-frozen bridge of ice which crosses the steep, deep clefts. His eyes sparkled when he spoke of the chamois' clever-

ness and their wonderful leaps, or of the föhnwind and the avalanche. He saw very well that he was gaining ground in the miller's favour, especially when he told him about the eagles and the vultures on the heights.

Not far off there was an eagle's nest in Canton Valais, cleverly built close under a projecting ledge of rock; and in the nest was a young eagle, but it was impossible to seize it. Only a few days before, an Englishman had offered Rudy a handful of gold if he could take the young eagle alive; "But there is a limit to everything," said Rudy. "No man living could do it; it would be only foolhardiness to try."

The wine flowed freely, and the talk never flagged. The evening was all too short, thought Rudy; and yet it was midnight when he returned home from his first visit to the mill.

The lights still twinkled behind the windows of the mill through the green leaves of the walnut trees; out through the hole in the roof came the parlour cat, the kitchen cat appeared along the spouting.

"Do you know what is going on in the

mill?" said the parlour cat. "There is a secret betrothal in the house. The miller knows nothing about it. Rudy and Babette have been treading on each other's paws under the table all the evening. They trod on me twice, but I did not mew, because it would have attracted attention."

"I should have mewed," said the kitchen cat.

"What is allowed in the kitchen would not be allowed in the parlour," said the parlour cat; "I am anxious to know what the miller will say when he hears of the engagement."

Yes, indeed; and Rudy was anxious to know that also. He had not long to wait. Before many days were over Rudy, hopeful as ever, was sitting in the omnibus which runs between Valais and Vaud, thinking of the consent which he should be sure to win before nightfall.

In the evening there was Rudy in the omnibus again; and in the mill the parlour cat was running about primed with news.

"Do you know what happened, you kitchen cat? The miller knows all now. Things have come to a pretty pass. Rudy has been here; he and Babette were whispering together for ever so long outside the miller's

door. I lay at their feet, but they had no eyes for me. 'I am going at once to see your father,' said Rudy; 'it is the most honourable way.' 'Shall I come with you,' said Babette, 'to give you courage?' 'I have plenty of courage,' said Rudy; 'but still, if you are with me your father must be civil, whether he will or no.' They got up, and Rudy trod with all his force on my tail. He is extremely awkward. I mewed, but neither he nor Babette paid the least attention. They opened the door and went in, but I went in first and sat on the back of a chair; I was curious to know how it would end. And it ended in this way—the miller showed Rudy the door, and sent him off to his mountains and his chamois. He may aim at them, but not at our Babette."

"But what passed? what did they say?" asked the kitchen cat.

"What did they say? Everything that people do say in such circumstances. 'I love her and she loves me, and when there is milk for one there is milk for two.'

"'Babette is above you,' said the miller; 'you look too high.'

"'Nothing is too high for a man to reach

if he knows how to climb,' said Rudy, for he is a bold fellow.

"'You cannot reach the eaglet in her nest,' said the miller; 'you said so yourself; and Babette is higher than the eaglet.'

"'I will have them both,' said Rudy.

"'Bring me the bird alive, and I will make you a present of Babette,' said the miller, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. 'But now we have had enough of this visit, Rudy; and if you call to-morrow you will find no one at home. I wish you good-day!'

"And Babette said good-bye, but as piteously as a little kitten who cannot see its mother. 'A word holds good between man and man,' said Rudy. 'Do not cry, Babette! I will win the young eaglet.' 'You will break your neck, I hope,' said the miller, 'and then we shall be rid of your coming here.' I call that a dismissal with a vengeance. Rudy is gone, and Babette sits and cries all day; but the miller goes about singing bits of German songs which he learned on his journey to Interlachen. I don't make myself miserable about it, for it does no good."

"But it seems that there is still a chance," said the kitchen cat.

VII. The Eagle's Nest.

Along the rocky path came the hunter's song, ringing out hope and gladness in every note. It was Rudy's voice; he was on his way to visit his friend Vesinaud.

"You must come to help me," he said; "we will take Nagli with us. I want to take the eaglet out of the nest under the ledge of rock."

"Why not the man out of the moon?" said his friend. "It would be just as easy. You seem in good spirits."

"So I am. I am thinking of getting married. But, seriously, I will tell you exactly how things are."

And before long Vesinaud and Nagli knew all that had happened.

"You are a bold lad!" they cried. "But it won't do. You will break your neck."

"A man never falls unless he thinks he is going to fall," said Rudy.

At midnight they set out with ladders, ropes, and poles; the path led upward through shrub and woodland, across loose, rolling stones, higher and higher. Waters

rushed beneath them and trickled from above; damp clouds sailed through the night. The hunters reached the ledge of the bare precipice. Here it was darker still, for the awful rocky walls nearly met, and below them was the abyss, with its roar and rush of water. The men sat silent on the stone to wait for dawn; the first thing to be done was to kill the mother eagle when she flew out of the nest in search of food. Rudy sat cowering down, and motionless, as if he were a piece of the rock on which he sat; his gun was cocked and ready for instant aim, his eyes were fixed on the topmost cleft, where the nest lay hidden below the projecting rock. The three hunters had a long, long time to wait.

At last something stirred and rustled overhead; two guns took careful aim; a shapeless form rose from the nest and darkened the air above them. A shot rang out sharply; for a moment the outspread wings fluttered, and then the royal bird sank slowly down; it seemed as if it must fill up the narrow cleft and tear the hunters down with it to the abyss below. Heavily it sank into the depth, breaking the twigs and bushes as it fell.

And now the hunters bestirred themselves. Three of the longest ladders were tied together and placed on the extreme outer point of the ledge; but they did not reach high enough; the rock rose smooth as a wall above the topmost of them to the nest. After a short consultation, it was agreed that two ladders must be tied together, dragged up to the peak above the eagle's nest, and let down thence over the projecting ledge, so that the lowest round met the top of the highest ladder from below. It was a dreadful business to drag the heavy ladders up the rock, but it was done at last; the top was made fast with cords, and the ladders let down over the projecting ledge, where they swung and trembled above the abyss. Rudy had already begun to climb. It was a bitterly cold morning; damp vapour clouds rose from the depths below; the young man clung as the fly clings to a loose straw which has fallen from the swallow's nest on the roof-chimney—only if the straw breaks the fly can fly away, while Rudy can but break his neck. The wind surged past his ears, and from the abyss below came the sound of the thawing glaciers of the ice maiden's palace.

The ladders swung as the cobweb swings beneath the climbing spider when it tries to clutch at something outside its web, for now Rudy had reached the top of the five ladders which rested on the ledge. He seized the two sides of the ladders above him; they had been tied with a strong and careful hand, but they creaked and swayed to and fro as if they hung on disjointed hinges.

The five ladders from below seemed no better than a bending reed. But the terrible part was now to come; Rudy had to climb as the cat climbs—well for him that he had learnt the lesson. He did not even know that Dizziness stood close behind him, stretching out his polypus arms ready to draw him down to the abyss. He was now on the highest round of the ladder, and even here he could not see into the nest, although he could touch it with his hand. He felt the thick branches which supported the lower part of the nest, and when he had tried their strength he swung himself off the ladder and raised himself breast-high above the nest. The horrible smell of putrid meat rose in his face from the carcases of young lambs, chamois, and birds. The evil spirit behind

him blew the foul air in his eyes in the hope of sending him stunned and blinded to the depths below, where the ice maiden herself lay floating on the black waters, her white hair unbound, her eyes fixed upon him with the deadly gleam, like the flash that comes from the muzzle of a gun.

"I have thee now!" she cried.

Down in a corner of the eagle's nest sat the young eaglet. It could not fly yet, but it was a strong, powerful bird. Rudy's eager eyes were fixed upon it; he grasped it firmly in one hand, and with the other he threw the noose round its legs. It was a prisoner, but alive; Rudy lifted it out, the silken cord held its legs firmly; he slung the bird over his shoulder so that it hung down far below his feet, and then, grasping the friendly rope from above, he swung himself on to the ladder and began his descent.

"Hold fast. Believe you cannot fall, and you shall not fall." It was the old lesson, and he had learnt it well. He held fast, he thought he could not fall, and he did not fall!

A wild shout of exultation and triumph burst from the men below. Rudy stood on the ledge of rock with the live eaglet in his hand.

VIII. What the Parlour Cat had to Tell.

"Here is what you asked me for," said Rudy, as he entered the miller's room at Bex. He set down a basket on the floor and raised the lid. Two yellow, black-rimmed eyes gleamed out, shooting forth angry sparks of light, as if they would burn up all on whom their glances fell. A short, hooked beak snapped savagely, and a red throat twisted to and fro.

"The eaglet!" cried the miller. Babette screamed and shrank back; her startled eyes turned from Rudy to the bird, and from the bird to Rudy.

"You are not easily frightened," said the miller.

"And you always keep your word," said Rudy. "Each of us has his own quality."

"Why ever did you not break your neck?" said the miller.

"Because I held fast," said Rudy; "and I shall hold fast to Babette."

"You have not got her yet," said the miller; but he laughed, and Babette knew that was a good sign.

"We must get the creature out of the basket; it stares enough to drive any one mad. How did you manage it?"

Rudy began at the beginning, and the miller opened his eyes in astonishment.

"You have certainly luck enough and pluck enough to win three wives," said the miller.

"Thank you," said Rudy; "but I only want one."

"You have not got Babette yet, young man," said the miller, patting him on the shoulder.

"Do you know the latest news from the mill?" said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. "Rudy has brought us the young eaglet and has received Babette in exchange. They have kissed each other, and they let the miller see them do it. That is as good as a betrothal. The old man was quite civil; he drew in his claws and took his after-dinner nap, leaving the young couple to sit and purr. They have so much to say that they will not have finished before Christmas."

And they had not finished before Christmas. The wind swept away the dry leaf; the snow-drifts rose high in the valleys; the ice maiden sat in her splendid winter palace,

where the walls rise smooth as glass and the summer waterfalls hang down like frozen crystal. Fantastic wreaths and garlands of glittering ice twine round the snowy pine branches. The ice maiden rides on the winter wind, even through the lowest valleys. She came to Bex and saw Rudy sitting in the mill with Babette. He was very often there in the winter-time, for the wedding was to take place in the following summer.

Within the pleasant room all was light and sunshine; Alpine roses stood on the tables and blossomed round Babette—pretty, laughing Babette!—who was herself a picture of the spring-time, the time which makes every bird in the greenwood sing of love and summer.

"How those two do chatter!" said the parlour cat. "They are always together. I have had enough of their mewing."

IX. The Ice Maiden.

The spring had flung abroad its bright green garlands of walnut and chestnut trees, and nowhere did they unfold more rich and luxuriant foliage than from the bridge of St.

Maurice to the shores of the lake of Geneva. Thither rushes the Rhone from its source beneath the grass-green glacier where the ice maiden lives. Sometimes she issues forth, riding on the icy wind, and sits where the hot sunlight vainly falls upon the snowy peaks; her sinister glance rests on the sunlit valleys below, where men are hurrying to and fro, busy as honey-bees.

"Powers and spirits, do the sun spirits call you?" she cried, scornfully. "Spirits? not so—worms of the earth, crushed by the first fall of snow!" She raised her proud head and looked round with death-darting eyes. From the mountain near came the sounds of pickaxe and the blasting of rocks. A tunnel was being made for the new railway.

"They are playing at moles," said the ice maiden, "burrowing passages under the earth, that is the reason of this baby clatter; when I remove my palaces, I do so to the sound of thunder and the hurricane."

A column of steam rose from the valley, bending forward like a fluttering veil; it was the waving plume from the steam-engine, as a train shot along the line, turning and twisting like the evolutions of a huge snake.

"They are playing at conquerors," said the ice maiden; "but the powers of Nature are the real victors." She laughed aloud, and the mocking tones echoed through the valley. "An avalanche is falling," people said.

But the spirits of the sunshine sang louder still. They sang of the will of man which must conquer in the end; which rides on the sea, removes mountains, fills up valleys, and subjects the powers of Nature to its decrees. Just then a string of travellers crossed the snow fields where the ice maiden sat; they had bound themselves one to the other with strong ropes; they looked like one body slowly moving across the glassy ice on the edge of the abyss.

"Worms!" said the ice maiden; "*you* to claim to be lords of the powers of Nature!" She turned from them and looked bodingly at the train as it flew forward across the deep valley. "There they sit, these thoughts and minds of men!" she cried. "One, proud as a king, sits alone; half of them are sleeping, half are packed in close groups. And when the steam-dragon stops, they will get out and disperse themselves through the world, to conquer it!" she laughed again.

"There falls another avalanche!" they said, in the valley.

"It cannot reach us," said two voices in the train—two hearts with only one pulse between them, as people say. It was Rudy and Babette. The miller was travelling with them.

"I go as luggage," he said; "I am taken as a necessary appendage."

"There they sit, those two," said the ice maiden. "Many a chamois have I crushed, many million Alpine roses have I trampled into ruin. I did not spare the roots. Those are the thoughts of men, down there—well, I will tread them out of the world!" and she laughed once more.

"There falls another avalanche!" they said, in the valley.

X. The Godmother.

Montreux, Clarens, Vevay, and Creci lie like a garland round the north-eastern shore of the Lake of Geneva. In Montreux lived Babette's rich godmother; she had just arrived there with her daughters and her nephew. The story of Babette's betrothal and the capture of

the young eaglet had delighted her beyond measure; and she had written to beg of the miller to bring Babette and her lover over to Montreux. That was the reason of the present journey.

The steamer was waiting for them at Villeneuve, at the end of the lake, and half an hour's journey would take them on to Vevay. Every turn of the coast has been sung by the poets: here, under the walnut trees, Byron sat by the deep-blue lake and wrote his "Prisoner of Chillon." Yonder, where the grey-green willows bend towards the waters, Rousseau wandered and dreamed of his Eloise. The Rhone streams into the lake from the snow-clad mountains of Savoy, and not far from the river's mouth rises a little island, so small that it looks only like a boat upon the lake. It is a tiny rock, which, about a hundred years ago, a lady caused to be enclosed with stones, covered with earth, and planted with three acacia trees. The trees have thriven well, and now they overshadow all the island. Babette was delighted with the spot; she said it was the prettiest place she had ever seen, and that she must visit it again some day. The steam-

boat bore them past it and landed them at Vevay.

They climbed up between the white, sunlit walls which bound the vineyards round Montreux. The peasants' cottages were shadowed by spreading fig trees, laurels and cypresses grew in the gardens; and half-way up the path was the house where Babette's godmother was staying.

The little party was heartily welcomed. The godmother was a pleasant-looking, round faced woman; as a little child, she must have looked like one of Raffaelle's angels. Now, she had an old angel-face with a glory of silver hair. The daughters were fair, tall, and slender. Their young cousin was a yellow-haired Englishman, with whiskers long enough for three gentlemen to share between them. He was dressed in white summer travelling dress, and paid Babette the greatest attention.

Richly-bound books, drawings, and tablets lay scattered about upon the tables; the balcony looked down upon the blue lake, which lay so still and clear that the mountains of Savoy were mirrored in its waters, with their towns, woods, and snowy peaks.

Rudy, who was generally so bold and ready

of speech, was not at ease; he walked about as if he were treading on egg-shells. The time seemed as long to him as if he were in a treadmill. And then they all went out for a walk. That was just as tiresome; Rudy could scarcely keep in step with them; it took him two steps forward and one back, they walked so slowly. They went over the Castle of Chillon, and saw its gloomy torture cells; the blocks and rusty chains, trap-doors through which the unhappy prisoners were thrust down on to sharp iron stakes below. And they called it a pleasure to see such things! a place of execution idealized by Byron's poem. Rudy saw nothing but the place of execution; he looked out of one of the heavy stone windows, and looked at the island on the lake. He wished himself there, away from all the chattering voices, under the acacia trees. But Babette has enjoyed herself immensely; she said that she thought the young Englishman perfect.

"A perfect coxcomb!" said Rudy; and that was the first time that Rudy had said anything which displeased her. The Englishman had given her a little book as a memento of the place: it was "The Prisoner of Chillon,"

translated into French, so that Babette could read it.

"The book may be all very well," said Rudy; "but the finely-combed fellow who gave it to you does not suit my taste."

"He looked just like a sack of flour without the flour," said the miller, laughing at his own wit. Rudy laughed also, and said "that was just what he did look like."

XI. The Cousin.

When Rudy came to the mill, a few days later, he found the young Englishman there. Babette was just going to take up a dish of trout to him; she had garnished the dish herself with fresh parsley, to make it look more inviting. That was quite unnecessary, Rudy thought. What brought the Englishman here? What did he come for? To be served and waited on by Babette? Rudy was jealous, and that delighted Babette. She liked to sound every chord of his heart, to know his strength and his weakness. Love was only play to her at present, and she played with Rudy's whole heart. It is only fair to say that he was her one and only love;

her best treasure in all the world; but yet, the more his brow darkened, the more her eyes sparkled with pleasure. She would almost have kissed the young Englishman, with his golden whiskers, if by that means she could have driven Rudy into a frenzy of jealousy, because that would show her how dearly he loved her. It was wrong and wicked of Babette; but then she was only eighteen. She did not think deeply about it; and still less did she think that her conduct, as the miller's daughter and Rudy's betrothed bride, might appear light and unwomanly in the eyes of the young Englishman, and of others also.

The mill stood on the high road, where the snow-clad mountains arch over the path. The country folk call the place Diablereto; a rushing mountain stream flows past it, churned into white foam, like soap-lather on grey water. The mill wheels were turned, not by this stream, but by a smaller one on the other side of the river. It dashed down the rocks and over a mill dam; then, gaining in power and speed, it fell into a wooden basin and flowed through a narrow channel to the wheel. The channel often overflowed, and at

best it only offered a slippery, dangerous path to any one who might take it into his head to use it as a short way to enter the mill. This idea had occurred to the young Englishman. Dressed in white, like a miller's boy, he clambered over it at night, guided by the light in Babette's window. But no one had taught him how to climb, and he nearly fell head first into the stream below. As it was, his sleeves and trousers were wet through and sprinkled with mud; and in that plight he climbed the linden tree before Babette's window, and began to imitate the cry of the night owl. It was the only bird to which he could do justice. Babette heard him and looked through the thin curtains. When she saw the white figure in the tree, she knew who it was, and her heart beat with shame and anger. She put out her light, saw that the bolts were closed, and let him howl, "Tu-whit, tu-whoo!" as long as he liked. How dreadful it would have been if Rudy had been in the mill! But Rudy was not in the mill: worse still, he was standing just under the linden tree! Babette heard the sound of loud, angry voices; very soon, blows, nay, murder might follow!

She opened the window in deadly fear, and called to Rudy, begging him to go away. "I will not have you stay here!" she cried.

"You will not have me stay here?" he said. "Then it was planned between you; I understand; you expected some one else. For shame, Babette!"

"You are intolerable!" said Babette. "Go away; I hate you!" and she cried with anger.

"I have not deserved this," said Rudy. He turned away; his cheeks and his heart burned like fire.

Babette threw herself on her bed and cried.

"He can think ill of me, and I love him so dearly!"

She broke out in anger, and that did her good. If she had not been angry, she would have been very unhappy. As it was, she could sleep the refreshing sleep of injured virtue.

XII. Evil Powers.

Rudy went homewards; he climbed the mountains and reached the cool, fresh air where the snow lay white and the ice maiden

reigned. The leafy trees lay so far below him that they looked like a potato field. The pines were stunted, Alpine roses grew here and there, the snow lay in strips and patches, like linen spread out to bleach. A blue gentian that stood right in his path he crushed under the but-end of his gun.

Higher up he saw two chamois; his eyes sparkled and his thoughts took another turn; he was not near enough to fire, and he climbed higher still. Scanty grass grew between the blocks of stone; the chamois walked lazily before him across the snow fields; he quickened his steps. The mists sank down around him; suddenly he found himself on the edge of the precipice. The rain began to fall heavily.

He felt a burning thirst; his head was hot as fire, his limbs cold as ice; he took up his hunting flask, but it was empty; he had never thought of filling it when he hurried away from the mill. He had never been ill before, but now he began to understand what it must feel like; he was tired, and felt a longing to rest and sleep, but the rain was falling all around. Everything danced and trembled before his eyes, when he suddenly

saw a little dwelling built against the rock. He had never noticed the house before; a young girl stood at the door; he thought at first it was the schoolmaster's daughter Annette, whom he had kissed in the dance, but it was not Annette. He must have seen her face before; perhaps it was at Grindelwald, the night of the shooting match at Interlachen.

"How did you come here?" he said.

"This is my home; I tend my flock."

"Your flock? Where do they feed? There is nothing here but snow."

"Much you know about what there is here!" said the girl, with a laugh. "Behind the rock is a capital pasture land, where I take my goats. I tend them carefully, and never lose one. What has been mine once is mine for ever."

"You are daring," said Rudy.

"So are you," she answered.

"Have you any milk in the house?" asked Rudy. "If you have, give me some, for I am parched with thirst."

"I will give you something better than milk," she said. "Yesterday some travellers rested here, with their guide, and they left one of their bottles of wine. You have never

tasted such wine. They will never come back for it, and I do not drink it. Take it."

She fetched the wine, poured it into a wooden bowl, and handed it to Rudy.

"It is good wine!" he cried. "I never tasted any like it."

His eyes sparkled; a glow of life and power ran through his veins, as if every care had vanished from his life.

"Why, it *is* Annette!" he cried. "Give me a kiss."

"Then give me the beautiful ring you are wearing on your finger."

"My betrothal ring?"

"Your betrothal ring!" echoed the maiden. She poured out a fresh draught of wine, and held it to his lips. He drank. A joyous thrill quickened his pulses; he felt as if the whole world belonged to him. Why should he fret and grieve? All things are made to be enjoyed, and to make us happy. The stream of life is the stream of joy, and to drift idly along its current is happiness. He looked at the young girl; it was Annette, and yet not Annette; still less could it be the phantom which had crossed his path at Grindelwald. The maiden before him was

fair as the white snow, fresh as the Alpine roses, nimble as a chamois; but she was flesh and blood, like himself. He flung his arms round her, looked for a moment in her clear eyes, and in that moment—ah! who can put it into words?—was it the soul's life or death? Was he lifted up to heaven, or dragged down to the abyss? He saw the ice round him widen into sea-blue, glassy walls, down which the water fell pearly clear, with a sound like the chime of fairy bells, and a gleam, like quivering arrows, of blue flame. The ice maiden kissed him, and her kiss thrilled him through with an icy shiver; a cry of pain broke from him, he tore himself from her arms, staggered, and his eyes closed in darkness. The powers of evil had played their game.

When Rudy unclosed his eyes the hut had vanished, and the maiden had vanished with it. Water dripped down from the bare rock; the snow lay all around; Rudy was wet to the skin, and shivering with cold. His betrothal ring, the ring Babette had given him, was no longer on his finger. His gun lay idly in the snow; he tried to fire it off, and it missed fire. Damp clouds hovered beneath

him in the ravine, and among them sat Dizziness, lurking to pounce upon his helpless prey. Far below there was a sound as if a mass of rock had fallen, and was crushing into ruin all that lay in its path.

But in the mill at Bex Babette was crying bitterly. Rudy had not been to see her for six days. Rudy, who had behaved so shamefully, who would have to beg her pardon, and whom she loved with all her heart!

XIII. In the Mill.

"Human beings are extremely queer," said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. "Rudy and Babette have fallen out now. She cries, and he does not appear to think any more about her."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said the kitchen cat.

"So am I," said the parlour cat; "but I am not going to make myself miserable about it. Let her marry yellow whiskers if she likes; but he has never been seen here since he tried to get on the roof."

Evil powers work their spells within us and around us. Rudy had found that out,

and thought about it a great deal. What had happened to him on the mountain? Was it a vision or a feverish fancy? Until that night he had known nothing either of fever or of any other illness. But as he passed sentence on Babette, he looked into his own heart, and saw there the traces of the wild hunt and the hot Föhn wind from the south. Should he be able to confess all to Babette? All the evil thoughts which might ripen into deeds in the hour of temptation? He had lost her ring, and that very loss had won him back to her. Would she confess to him? His heart swelled as he thought of her; a host of memories arose within him. He saw her as clearly as if she stood before him—a pretty, pouting child. Many a loving word which she had spoken out of the fulness of her heart passed like a sunbeam through his memory, and before long all was sunshine when he thought of Babette.

Yes; she must confess to him, and she should, too!

He went to the mill. The confession began with a kiss, and ended by Rudy's being pronounced the only sinner. It was all his fault. It was simply abominable of him to

doubt Babette! Such mistrust and violence might bring them both into misery. Yes, they might. And Babette preached him a little sermon that highly amused them both and suited her bewitchingly well. In one thing she owned Rudy was quite right. The cousin *was* a coxcomb, and she was going to burn the book he had given her; for she did not wish to have anything which could remind her of him.

"The quarrel is over," said the parlour cat. "They have made it up. Rudy has been here, and they are friends again. They say it is the greatest happiness in the world."

"I heard, the other night," said the kitchen cat—"I heard some rats say that the greatest happiness in the world was to eat tallow candles and to have plenty of greasy bacon. Now, who is to be believed—the rats or the lovers?"

"Believe nobody," said the parlour cat. "That is always the safest."

The fairest and brightest day for Rudy and Babette was drawing near. The wedding was at hand.

They were not to be married in Bex. Babette's godmother had insisted that the

wedding should take place in the little church at Montreux. The miller made a point of attending to her wishes, for he knew what her wedding present would be, and it was quite worth while to try and please her. The day was fixed. They were to start for Villeneuve in the evening, and early the next morning they would take the boat to Montreux, so that the young English ladies might dress the bride.

"I suppose there will be some kind of a wedding feast in the mill?" said the parlour cat. "If not, I would not give a mew for the whole business!"

"There will be a feast," said the kitchen cat. "Ducks are being killed and fowls plucked. There is a whole roebuck roasting on the spit. It makes my mouth water. They start to-morrow."

Yes, to-morrow! Rudy and Babette were sitting together for the last time as betrothed lovers in the mill.

The Alpine heights glowed red, the bells rang, the spirits of the sunshine sang, "Whatever happens is the best—let the best happen!"

XIV. Dreams of the Night.

The sun had set; the clouds sank down between the mountains into the Rhone valley; the Föhn wind blew from the African plains across the Alps. It tore the clouds to pieces and sank into sudden stillness. The torn clouds hung in strange, fantastic shapes among the mountains and the hurrying Rhone. They took the form of the sea monsters of primeval ages, of hovering eagles, of giant frogs from the marsh. They sank down to the rushing river and sailed above it in the air. The stream tore away an uprooted pine stem, and whirled it round and round in circling eddies. The spirits Dizziness and his fellows rose from the foaming stream; the white moonshine fell upon them, upon the woods and driving clouds, and the strange visions of the night. The mountaineers saw them through their window panes: they sailed in front of their queen, the ice maiden. She had left her glacier palace, and, seated on the fragile pine stem, she floated down the icy current towards the lake.

"The wedding guests are coming," sighed spectre voices, high in the air.

Spectres without, and dreams within. Babette dreamed a wonderful dream.

It seemed to her that she had been married for years to Rudy, and that she was sitting in her house while her husband was hunting the chamois on the mountains. By her side sat the fair-haired Englishman; his eyes were eloquent, his words charmed her like a spell, he held out his hand, and she rose up to follow him. They left the house together. Downwards, and ever downwards—it seemed as if a load of sin lay on her heart—sin against Rudy and against God. Suddenly she found herself alone; her clothes torn, her hair turned grey. In her agony she looked up, and on the edge of the rock above her she saw Rudy. She stretched out her arms to him, but dared not call to him; then she saw that it was not he, but only his hat and coat set up on his alpenstock, as the hunters do when they wish to deceive the chamois. Then Babette felt that her heart was broken. "Oh, that I had died upon my wedding day!" she cried. "That would have been the best for Rudy and for me.

Who can tell what lies before him?" And, in godless despair, she flung herself down from the rock. A string snapped, a wail arose——!

Babette awoke, pale as death; but the dream had passed away. "Why had she dreamed of the Englishman?" she asked herself, with a shudder. "Could he be at Montreux? Would she see him at the wedding?" A shadow crossed her face and she knit her brow; but soon the smiles came back again, for the sun was shining, and to-morrow was her wedding day.

Rudy was already in the parlour when she came down-stairs, and before long they started to Villeneuve. They were very happy; and the miller was as happy as either of them; he was a good father and a kind-hearted soul.

"Now we have the house to ourselves," said the parlour cat.

XV. The End.

It was not quite dark when the travellers reached Villeneuve and ordered supper. The miller leant back in his arm chair, smoked

his pipe, and took his evening nap. The lovers walked arm-in-arm along the shore of the deep-blue lake, the gloomy walls and grey towers of Chillon were mirrored in the waters, the little island with the three acacias lay like a nosegay on the lake.

"It must be lovely on that island," said Babette. "How I long to go across and see it!" The wish was not hard to realize. A boat lay tied up almost at their feet; it was easy to undo the knot. There was no one in sight to ask whether they might have the boat, and Rudy untied it without further ceremony: he could manage an oar well.

Away they flew over the yielding water, so supple and so strong. It has a pliant back to carry burdens, and hungry jaws to swallow treasure; it is mild as feebleness itself, and strong as death and destruction. In a few moments they landed on the island; there was only room for one couple of dancers. Rudy waltzed round twice, three times, with Babette in his arms; then they sat down under the acacias and watched the lake and sky and shore turn red and gold in the sunset. The pine woods changed to a pure lilac, like a bank of heather, and where the

trees ended the bare rock gleamed as if it were transparent. The clouds were crimson, and the lake heaved like a floating roseleaf. Gradually the violet shadows stole down the snow-clad mountains of Savoy; the topmost peak glowed like lava newy issued from the earth. Rudy and Babette said there had never been such an Alpine glow. The Dent du Midi shone like the disc of the full moon against the horizon.

"What beauty! what happiness!" cried the lovers.

"Earth has no more to give me," said Rudy. "A night like this is worth a whole life. How often I have been so happy that I have said to myself, 'If you were to die this moment, what a happy life yours would have been!' Then the day ended, and the next began, and was happier still. How good God is to us, Babette!"

"I am so happy—happy to the depths of my heart!" she said.

"The world can give me no more than this," repeated Rudy.

The vesper bells rang out from the mountains of Savoy, and in the golden west rose the violet heights of the Jura.

"God grant you always the best and happiest, Rudy!" said Babette.

"He will," said Rudy. "To-morrow He will give me you to be my own true wife."

"The boat!" cried Babette suddenly.

The boat had broken loose and was drifting away from the island.

"I will fetch it back," said Rudy. He threw aside his coat and boots and swam after the boat with powerful strokes.

Cold and deep was the ice current from the glacier in the mountains. Rudy looked into the depths and saw, for a second, the shine and glitter of a golden ring. He thought of his betrothal ring, and as he thought the ring in the water grew larger and larger, and deep below the eddying circles he saw the clear glacier; fathomless clefts yawned within it; the water dripped down pearly clear, with a sound like the chime of bells, and a gleam like white and blue flames. In one flash he saw all that takes us many words to write. Hunters and maidens, men and women, who had fallen into the ice clefts of the mountain, were standing, alive, in the ice queen's palace, with smiling eyes and rosy lips. Farther away still came the sound of a

mighty organ and the bells of ruined cities buried beneath the sea. He saw the people kneeling in prayer beneath the fretted roof of ice; the organ pipes were all of ice, and the roaring ice stream lent them their echoing tones. On the clear, transparent ground sat the ice maiden. She saw Rudy, darted up through the water, and kissed his feet. An electric shock—the shiver of death itself—passed through his limbs. Ice or fire? Who could tell which?

"Mine! mine!" she cried. "I kissed your brow when you were a little child. I kissed your lips when you were a man. Now I have kissed your feet and made you wholly mine!"

He disappeared in the clear, blue water.

All was silent: the bells ceased their chiming; the last tones died away along the sunset clouds.

"Mine!" sounded a voice from below.

"Mine!" echoed a voice from God's heaven.

Ah, how glorious to pass from love to love, from earth to heaven!

A string snapped, a wail arose; death's icy kiss conquered the transitory; the discord

was resolved to harmony; the prologue ended that the life drama might begin.

Do you call this a sad story?

Poor Babette! To her it was all hopeless, despairing sorrow. The boat drifted farther away; not a soul at Vevay knew that the bridal pair had rowed to the little island. The night came on heavy with cloud and storm; flash followed flash from the heights of Jura, and glittered over Switzerland and over Savoy; blue lightning and heavy thunder-claps following each other at scarcely a moment's interval. Sometimes the lightning flamed out clear as the noontide, and every vineyard stood forth in the yellow glare, only to be again engulphed in sudden darkness. Sometimes the flashes came in leaping circles, in zigzags and scrolls of fire. The boat drifted to the shore; all living things sought for shelter; and at length the rain streamed down in fury.

"Where can Rudy and Babette be in all this storm?" said the miller.

Babette was sitting motionless, without one cry or moan; her hands lay folded in her lap, her heart seemed dead.

"Under the deep water!" she murmured to

herself. "There he lies, as if he were under the glacier."

She remembered all he had told her of his mother's death, and of his rescue from the ice cleft. "The ice maiden has him at last!" she cried.

A flash, vivid, and blinding as white fire, shone in her startled eyes. She sprang to her feet; the lake rose like a shining glacier, and on the waters stood the spectral, gleaming form of the ice maiden. A blueish glory shone round her; she stood there proudly, drawn up to her full height, her cruel feet resting on Rudy's corpse. "Mine!" she cried; and once more the darkness closed in above the rolling waters.

Then Babette broke out into wild sorrow. "Oh, God," she cried, "send down to comfort me! Why must he die when the day of our happiness was about to dawn? I cannot comprehend Thy dealings. I grope in the dark amid the decrees of Thy Almighty wisdom!"

A ray of light flashed through her heart in answer to her prayer. Suddenly there arose before her her dream of last night; she remembered her own despairing words, "W[illegible]v

did I not die upon my wedding day? That would have been the best for Rudy and for me!"

"Alas!" she cried, "was the germ of sin lying hidden in my heart? Was the dream a picture of my future life? a string which must be snapped before I could be saved? Unhappy that I am!"

Weeping, she sat there in the gloomy night. Through the deep stillness Rudy's last words rang again and again through her ears. "Earth has no more that it can give me." They were spoken out of the fulness of joy, they echoed back in the depths of sorrow.

Years nave passed away. The lake smiles within its smiling shores, the vines put forth their swelling grapes, steamboats cross the water with flags flying, and little pleasure boats dart to and fro like white butterflies. The railroad from Chillon to the Rhone valley is open, and at every station alight troops of visitors, with guide-books bound in red cloth, to teach them what they ought to visit. They make parties to Chillon, they admire the little island with the three acacias, and the

guide-books tell them the story of the bridal pair who rowed thither one evening in the year 1856. "Not till the following morning were the bride's cries for help heard on the shore," says the guide-book.

But the book says nothing of Babette's quiet after-life with her father. Not at the mill; that is in the hands of strangers now. The miller and his daughter live in a large house near the railway station; and from the windows they can look across the chestnut trees to the Alps where Rudy loved to climb. As the sun sets they see the Alpine glow; the spirits of the sunshine encamp upon the mountain heights and sing their old song about the wanderer from whom the storm-wind tore his mantle—the outer covering, but not the man himself.

Roselight falls on the Alpine snow, roselight blesses every heart in which this thought dwells—"God's Will is best."

But the lesson is not taught to every one as clearly as it was to Babette in her dream.

The Last Pearl.

WE are in a rich and happy house, where all, master and mistress, friends and servants, are filled with joy and gladness. That very day has seen a son and heir born to the happy parents.

In the room where the mother and child were sleeping the lamp was carefully shaded, silken curtains were drawn before the windows; the carpet was soft as moss, and everything breathed of rest and peace. The nurse was sleeping; and she could sleep with a heart at rest, for all was well. The fairy of the house bent over the bed and held a network of glittering stars above the child; each star was a pearl of fortune and happiness. Among them one saw health, riches, fortune, love—all that man longs for here below.

"They have brought all," said the fairy.

"Not all," said a voice near. It came from the child's guardian angel. "One fairy has kept back her gift. She will bring it,

but not yet; not till years have passed away. The last pearl is wanting."

"The last pearl wanting? But that must not be. Let us go and seek the fairy, that the starry wreath may be complete."

"She will come; do not fear. She will come unsought."

"Tell me where she lives. Why is she lingering? Tell me where to find her, and I will go and get the pearl."

"You *will* go?" said the good angel.

"Then I will leady ou to her at once, wherever she may be. She has no settled home, she passes from the palace to the cottage, but she leaves no child of man untouched. To all she brings a gift, whether it be a bauble or a world. And she will come to this child also. You will not wait for her? Then let us go to fetch the pearl, the last in the wreath."

Hand-in-hand they flew to the place where the fairy was staying with her pearl.

It was a large house, with gloomy corridors and empty rooms; a strange stillness rested upon it; through the open windows the night air entered at will, and the long white blinds stirred in the chill wind.

Within the largest room stood an open coffin, in which lay the body of a woman, young and very beautiful. Freshly-gathered roses lay on her breast and folded hands; her fair face, ennobled and glorified by death, bore in its stillness the outward sign of its dedication to God and its entrance into the Unseen.

Husband and children stood round the coffin, and their tears fell like rain: the youngest child nestled in its father's arms. All were taking their last look on the dear

face; the father kissed her hand. It lay helpless as a fallen leaf; a little while back it was unwearied in loving, helpful deeds for all. No word was spoken, but in the silence lay a world of sorrow. With hushed steps the mourners left the chamber.

A burning taper stands by the coffin; its red wick rises higher and the flame flutters in the wind. Strange footsteps enter the room, the lid is placed upon the coffin, and the strokes of the hammer fall heaviest on the mourners' hearts.

"Whither have you led me?" said the fairy. "You will find no pearl here."

"Here in this very room, hallowed by prayer and sorrow," said the angel. She pointed to a corner of the room, the place where the dead mother used to have her chair, among her flowers and books, and from which, like the good fairy of the house, she used to pour her gifts on all, and be the focus and centre of all household joy. A stranger sat there now, a woman draped in black; it was the fairy Sorrow, reigning as mistress in the place of the dead. A hot tear fell in her lap, and lay there like a pearl; it glittered with all the colours of

the rainbow, and the angel took it in his hand.

"Here is the last, best pearl," said the angel: "the pearl of sorrow, which lends a lustre and a meaning to all the rest. Learn to see within it the glory of the rainbow which binds earth to heaven; the bridge that leads us through death to life. Only in darkness we can see the stars, only through sorrow can we reach perfection. Within the pearl of sorrow the soul's wings lie folded, waiting to bear us hence to eternal joy."

In the Duckyard.

THERE was once a Portuguese duck—Spanish, some people said; but it does not signify; any way, she was called the Portuguese. She laid eggs, was killed, cooked, and eaten; that was her path in life. All the ducklings that crept out of her eggs were also called Portuguese, and that was something to begin with. After a while the family dwindled down to one duck, and the

duckyard was often invaded by hens, and crowed over by the cock.

"His loud crowing irritates me," said the Portuguese; "but no one can deny that he is good-looking, considering that he is not a drake. He ought to modulate his voice better; but that is an art only learned in the higher circles; you find it among the singing-birds in linden trees over the garden wall. How beautifully they sing! There is something so touching in their voices—quite Portuguese, I call it. If I had a little singing-bird of my own I would be quite a mother to it; it is my nature to be kind—it lies in my Portuguese blood."

As she spoke, a little singing-bird fell head over heels into the duckyard from the roof. The cat had chased it, and its wing was broken.

"That is just like the cat," said the Portuguese duck: "she is a monster. I saw that when I had children of my own. To think that such a creature should be allowed to live and wander about respectable people's roofs! I do not believe it is the case in Portugal."

She pitied the little singing-bird, and so did the other ducks who were not Portuguese.

"Poor little thing!" they said, as they came up one after the other. "We certainly cannot sing; but we have a kind of sounding-board, or something of the kind, inside us; we feel that it is there, though we do not talk much about it."

"I must do something for the poor little creature," said the Portuguese duck; "it is only my duty." She flew into the water-trough and flapped her wings till the water splashed out over the singing-bird. It was half drowned by its bath, but it was kindly meant.

"That is a good action," said the Portuguese duck. "I hope the others will take example by me."

"Tweet!" said the little bird. One of its wings was broken and it could scarcely shake itself, but it understood that the shower-bath was kindly meant. "You have a kind heart, madame," it said; but it did not desire another bath.

"I have never thought about my heart," said the Portuguese; "but I know that I love all my fellow creatures, excepting cats; and since a cat ate two of my ducklings, no one can expect me to love cats. Make your-

self at home; it is not difficult. I am not a native of this country, as I dare say you have seen by my manner and appearance; my drake belongs to this place, he is not of my family, but I am not proud. If any one in the yard can understand you, I may say that it will be myself."

"She has Portugal on the brain," said a common little duck who affected to be witty. The other common ducks were delighted with the joke. "Portugal on the brain!" they cried. "Did you hear that? It was too good."

The ducks crowded round the little singing-bird. "The Portuguese will manage the language best," they said.

"As for us, we don't use quite such long words, but we have just as much sympathy. If we can do nothing else for you, we can walk about quietly, and perhaps that is the best."

"You have a lovely voice," said one of the others.

"It must be a delightful feeling to be able to give so much joy to others. I do not know how to sing myself, and so I hold my tongue. That is better than talking nonsense."

"Don't tease him so," said the Portuguese; "he requires rest and attention. Shall I give you another bath?"

"Oh no, let me keep myself dry!" he said.

"The water cure is the only thing that benefits me when I am indisposed," said the Portuguese. "Amusements are also very beneficial. Our neighbours the hens will pay us a visit before long; among them are two Cochin China fowls; they wear trousers, are highly cultivated, and are of foreign extraction. I think the more of them on that account."

The hens arrived; the cock was with them; he was so polite this time that he was not at all rude.

"You are a genuine singing-bird," he said, "and you make as much of your little voice as you possibly can. But one must have a little more of the locomotive about one's tones, if one wishes people to know one is there."

The Cochin China fowls were charmed with the singing-bird. He was still ruffled from his bath, and looked, as they said, like a Cochin China chicken. "He is charming," they cried; and they began to talk Chinese to him.

"You and we are of the same race," they

said. "All the ducks, even the Portuguese, are aquatic birds. I dare say you have noticed that. You do not know us yet; it is not every one who takes the trouble to learn to know us; not even among the hens, although we are born to fill a higher place than most of the others. We care little about their neglect, however; we go quietly on our own way ,their principles are not ours. We only look on the best side of everything, and only speak of what is good. It is very difficult, for there is really none to speak of. Excepting ourselves and the cock, there is positively no one who is at once clever and polite. Certainly not the inhabitants of the duckyard. We warn you, my dear little singing-bird: pray do not trust that short-tailed duck; she is most deceitful. The speckled one, over there, is extremely quarrelsome, she always manages to have the last word and to be in the wrong. The fat duck yonder speaks ill of every one; now that is contrary to our nature; if one has nothing good to say of one's neighbour, one should hold one's beak. The Portuguese is the only one who has any pretensions to cultivation and good manners; but she is passionate, and talks a great deal too much about Portugal."

"What are those Cochin China fowls whispering about?" said the ducks. "I am sick of seeing them; they are always whispering. I never speak to them."

Just then the drake came up. He took the singing-bird for a sparrow. "Isn't it a sparrow?" he said. "How should I know? It is all the same thing; he belongs to the playthings of life; and when one likes playthings, one gets them; that is all."

"Do not mind anything he says," whispered the Portuguese. "He is very respectable as a drake of business, and he thinks that business should go before all. I am going to rest myself now. I consider that it is a duty which every duck owes to herself, so that she may be nice and fat when she is embalmed in sage and onions."

She laid herself down in the sun and blinked with one eye; she had a comfortable place and slept soundly.

The little singing-bird was busy with his broken wing; at last he too lay still, nestled closely against his protectress; the sun was warm; he too had found a good place.

Meanwhile the hens were wide awake; they walked about, scratching and pecking; in

reality, they had only come to find something to eat. The Cochin China pair was the first to leave, and the others soon after followed them. The witty duckling pointed to the Portuguese and the little bird, and said that the old Portuguese was growing bird-childish. The other ducks laughed immoderately. "Bird-childish!" they whispered. "What a capital hit!" And they repeated the old joke about "Portugal on the brain."

When all had been silent for a while, a handful of food was thrown among them with such force that they all bounced up in a great commotion. The Portuguese trod heavily on the little singing-bird.

"Tweet!" he cried. "You hurt me, madame."

"Why do you lie in my way?" she said. "You should not be so sensitive. I have nerves as well as you, but you don't hear me cry tweet!"

"Do not be angry with me," said the singing-bird; "it slipped out before I was aware."

The Portuguese did not hear him; she was already among the others, eating as fast as she could. When she had finished her meal she

came to lie down again. The little bird nestled up to her and sang, to make himself agreeable.

"Tra-la, tra-la!
To the sky
I sing and fly:
To my nest
I sink and rest,
Tra-la, tra-la!"

"I wish to be quiet after my meals," said the Portuguese. "You must conform to the ways of the yard. I am going to sleep."

The little bird was quite taken aback, for he thought he should please her by his singing. When the Portuguese awoke, he came up to her with a grain of corn which he had found; he laid it at her feet; but as she had not slept well she was, of course, in a very bad temper.

"Give it to a chicken," she said, "and do not be always getting in my way."

"Why are you angry?" said the little bird. "What have I done?"

"Done?" said the Portuguese. "What a vulgar expression! Pray, pay more attention to your words."

"Yesterday the sun shone," said the little bird; "to-day the air is close and grey."

"You do not seem to have been taught how to calculate," said the Portuguese. "The day is not over yet. Now, do not stand so stupidly looking at me!"

"But your eyes look like the eyes that hunted me into the yard."

"What!" cried the Portuguese, "you compare me with the cat—the cruel beast of prey? There is not a drop of base blood within me. I took care of you, and I will try and teach you better manners."

She straightway bit off the bird's head. He lay dead at her feet.

"Now look at that!" she cried. "Could he not even bear that? He was really too fragile for this world. I have been a mother to him, that I am sure of. I have a kind heart."

The cock put his head inside the yard and crowed with locomotive power.

"You will be the death of me, with your crowing!" she cried.

"It is all your fault. He has lost his head, and I shall soon go out of my mind."

"There is not much of him left," said the cock.

"Speak respectfully of him," said the

Portuguese. "He was very good style, and highly cultivated. And he was extremely affectionate and tender-hearted. I like to see that both in animals and in men, as they call themselves."

The ducks crowded round the dead bird. They have strong passions, and feel both envy and pity very deeply. Here there was nothing to envy, so they gave free vent to their pity.

"We shall never have such another singing-bird!" said the Cochin China fowls; "he was almost a Chinese."

They wept till they clucked again, and then all the hens clucked; and the ducks walked about with red eyes.

"We have feeling hearts," they said; "no one can dispute that."

"Indeed, we have!" said the Portuguese· "almost as much as they have in Portugal."

"Now, let us think about getting something to eat," said the drake. "That is the most important thing. If one plaything gets broken, we find another, that is all."

The Bottle Neck.

IN a narrow, poverty-stricken lane there stood, among other squalid houses, one with which time had dealt so hardly that it looked ready to fall in all directions. Many poor families lived in the house, and the poorest person of all lived in the garret chamber, under the gable roof. In the little window hung a birdcage, in which there was not even a glass to hold the water. The bird drank out of a bottle neck, which was turned upside down and made fast with a cork. An old maid stood at the window; she put some groundsel into the cage, and the bird hopped about and sang so merrily that it was a pleasure to hear it.

"Yes; it is easy for you to sing," said the bottle neck—that is, he did not speak as we do, because a bottle neck cannot speak, but he thought it quietly to himself, just as we often say things to ourselves without speaking. "You may well sing, with all your proper limbs in good order. You should just try it

when there is only the top of you left, and that turned upside down and made fast with a cork. I don't think you would sing then. But perhaps it is as well for somebody to be in good spirits. I have no reason to sing, even if I could. Now, when I was a whole bottle, I sang well. I was called a perfect lark. That was when I went with the furrier's family to the picnic. We went into the wood, and the daughter received an offer that very day. I remember it as well as if it were yesterday. I have gone through a great deal, now I come to reflect upon it. I have passed through fire and water; I have lain deep in the earth, and have risen higher than most folk, and now I am swinging inside a bird's cage. It would be worth while to listen to my story, though I do not talk loud about it. I cannot; that is the reason."

The bottle neck then began to tell its story —to think it over, that is. The bird sang his own song, and down in the street below every one went on his way, thinking of his own affairs or of nothing at all. The bottle neck began with the furnace in the glass works: he remembered, first of all, that he was blown into life and felt very warm. He looked into

the glowing oven from which he was taken

and felt as if he should like to jump back

again into its hot glow; but after a while he grew comfortable and happy where he was. He stood in a row with a regiment of bottles like himself—all brothers and sisters sprung from the same oven. Some were cast into champagne bottles, and some beer bottles, and that made a difference between them. Later in life it may easily happen that the beer bottle may be filled with champagne and brought into good society, with music and singing, and every accompaniment of refined existence.

On the other hand, it is possible that a champagne bottle may be filled with blacking; but that does not signify, it is easy to see by the shape which is the genuine aristocrat. Birth must tell, even if one is filled with blacking.

"At that time I did not think that I should end my days in a birdcage, though even here I am of use in the world; it is not an ignoble existence. When I saw the daylight again, after my removal from the glass works, I found myself being washed and rinsed out in a wine merchant's cellar. It was a curious feeling. There we lay, hollow and empty, without any corks, feeling as if we wanted something which we did not know how to

name. At last we were filled with rich, delicious wine, corked close, and sealed with red sealing-wax. As for me, I was ticketed "First class," as if I had taken honours in an examination; and, indeed, both the wine and the bottle were of the best quality. When one is young one is a poet by instinct. Voices sang within me of sunny lands where the vines hang laden with purple grapes, and of the joyous songs and dances of the vintage time. How beautiful life is! The voices sang in me, as they sing in the heart of the youthful poet, speaking of things which neither he nor I can comprehend.

"One morning I was bought by the furrier's 'prentice lad; he had been ordered to buy a bottle of the richest wine, and he chose me. I was packed in a basket with ham, cheese, and sausages, with the freshest butter and the whitest bread. The furrier's daughter packed me up herself; she was young and beautiful, with soft brown eyes and a smiling mouth. Her hands were small and white, her neck was whiter still; she was the loveliest girl in all the town, and yet she had no sweetheart.

"The basket rested on the young girl's side as we drove out to the wood; I peeped out

of the white *serviette*, and my red seal stared her full in the face. I was very well placed and could see the young sailor by her side. He was the son of a portrait painter, and had just passed his examination and been appointed mate on board a merchant vessel. The next day he was about to sail for foreign climes. There was a great deal said about his coming voyage, and the young girl's lips lost all their smiles.

"The two young people wandered off alone into the forest paths and talked together. What did they say? I cannot tell you that. I was in the provision basket. But when they came back I was taken out immediately; everybody laughed; the furrier's daughter was rather silent, but her cheeks glowed like two roses.

"The father took the corkscrew in his hand. It is a curious sensation to be uncorked for the first time. I never forgot the solemn moment, a voice within me cried 'Pop!' as the cork flew out; and how it gurgled as the wine flowed into the glasses!

"'A health to the betrothed couple,' said the father; every glass was drained to the dregs, and the young sailor kissed his plighted bride.

"'Health and happiness!' cried the old people. 'A safe return and a happy wedding, this time next year!' said the sailor. Again the glasses were emptied. The young man lifted me high in the air and said, 'You have served me on the happiest day of my life; no one shall drink from you again.'

"But he was mistaken in that. He hurled me through the air. I fell among the reeds on the shore of a little pond, and it seems to me that I lay there a long time. 'I gave them wine, and they have given me muddy water,' I thought to myself; 'but I believe they meant well.' I could no longer see the merry picnic party, but I could hear their songs and laughter. At last there came up two peasant lads who saw me lying in the reeds and took me home.

"In the forester's hut, where the two boys lived, their mother was busily packing up a few things for their eldest brother Peter. He was a sailor, and had been there the day before to say good-bye. A parcel had just been tied up—a small bottle filled with herb tea and brandy—when the boys came in, carrying me. I was a stronger, larger bottle, and could hold more, so they took me instead

of the smaller one. The stuff they poured inside me was certainly not like the rich red wine, but it was very good in its way. The father carried me into the town and gave me to the young sailor, with his mother's last farewells. Thus it was that I started out on my wanderings with Peter Jensen; and the first person I saw on the ship was the young sailor who threw me into the pond. But he did not even look at me; and if he had, he would scarcely have known that it was I who had celebrated his betrothal and given the wine with which they drank to his safe return.

"I had no more wine to give any one now, but I had something quite as good. Whenever Peter fetched me out for the benefit of his comrades he was called 'the apothecary;' the medicine was pronounced excellent, and I dispensed it faithfully as long as I had a drop left inside me. Those were merry days, and it was then that the sailors, on hearing me sing and gurgle, gave me the name of Peter Jensen's lark.

"Days and months passed by, and I was laid aside in a corner. I cannot tell whether it was on the outward voyage or on the return home, for I never got a sight of land; but

suddenly a storm rose, and we tossed and rocked on the black, raging billows. The masts broke, the pumps were useless, and the ship sank in the pitch darkness. Just at the last moment the young mate thrust a paper into my neck, replaced the cork, and hurled me into the sea. On the paper was written the name of his ship and of his bride, and the words, 'We are sinking. God's will be done!' He little thought that the very bottle out of which his cup of hope and gladness had been filled was now drifting along the waves bearing a message from the dead.

"The ship sank with all hands; I flew forward like a bird with my loving greeting. The sun rose and set. I felt as I felt long ago when I wished so earnestly to fly back to my oven and rest.

"I passed through many calms and storms, and was not harmed by sea monsters or by the jagged breakers. The current carried me northward or southward, as it happened. In short, I was my own master, and I soon found that one might easily have too much of one's own will.

"The written paper, with its last farewell, would only bring sorrow and mourning when

it fell into the proper hands; but where were the little hands, so soft and white, which spread the white cloth on the forest turf on the betrothal day? Where was the furrier's pretty daughter? Where was my native land? In a word, where was I myself? I grew heartily tired of drifting about; I was never made for such work. At last I drifted to land; but, alas! I could not understand a word that was spoken. It was a foreign country, and one really loses a good deal by being ignorant of the languages spoken round one.

"I was picked up and examined very carefully; the paper was taken out and unfolded, and turned first on one side and then on the other; but no one could read a word of the writing. They guessed that I had been thrown overboard, and that the paper could tell them more about it; but what did the paper say? It was put back in its place, and I was kept in a dark cupboard in a large house.

"Every time any foreigners arrived I was brought out and the paper was handed round; and after a while the words, which were only written in pencil, got so smeared and rubbed that they were quite illegible. I stayed for

some time in the cupboard, and then I was laid on the ground, and soon became covered with dust and cobwebs. How often I thought of the happy days when I poured out rich wine in the green woods, or even when I tossed upon the waves, bearing a loving greeting, a farewell sigh!

"I was left untouched for twenty years, and I might have lain in the dust till now, only that the house was pulled down to be rebuilt. Some people found me, but I could not understand what they said; it is impossible to learn a language when one has been kept for twenty years in the attic. If I had been brought down-stairs I might have learned it well.

"However, the people washed and rinsed me out, and I really wanted the attention. It made me feel young again; I looked quite clear and transparent; but my letter that I had kept so carefully was lost in the process.

"I was filled with seeds, and I had a general notion what they were. After that, I was sent on my travels again, but in perfect darkness; I had not even a lamp or lantern, not to speak of a sight of the sun and moon, till I reached my destination and was unpacked.

"'How carefully they have packed this

bottle!' said a voice; 'and I dare say it will be broken after all.' But I was not broken; and, what is more, I understood every word; it was the language which I heard spoken round my native oven, in the forest, and on board ship —the dear old language which I understood so well! I had come home again, and every word was a greeting and a welcome. I nearly jumped out of their hands for joy; and I scarcely noticed that I was uncorked, emptied, and laid by in the cellar. There is no place like home, even if it is a cellar. I lay there for many years, I believe, happy and contented, and then I was brought out once more.

"There was a great festival going on—a garden feast, with fireworks and illuminations. Chinese lanterns hung like gigantic tulips, and wreaths of coloured lamps stretched from tree to tree. It was a lovely evening; the stars were shining, and the crescent moon rose with the pale blue disc of the full moon cradled within it: it was a pretty sight for good eyes.

"The illuminations extended to the most secluded paths, and gave sufficient light to find one's way. At intervals one came on bottles holding burning tapers, and among

these bottles I obtained a very good place. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, for I was once more among green leaves, the sound of music and laughter, and the sight of happy faces. The greatest crowd was gathered together where the Chinese lanterns shed round their many-coloured splendour; but I liked my place just as well; it was hushed, and had a charm of its own. In such an hour one forgets twenty years of neglect in a garret; and it is good to forget.

"A solitary couple wandered by me, and made me think of the gallant sailor and the furrier's daughter; it was as if I was living over my life again." Among the people in the gardens were some who were not invited guests, but who were allowed to wander round the outskirts of the illuminations and see what they could of its beauty. And thus it was that an old maid wandered down the path and thought of the day in the green wood, and of the happiest hour of her life. One does not forget such hours if one lives to be ever so old. She passed close to the bottle, but neither recognized the other; that is often the way with people in this world. We take up the bottle's story from this point.

The feast was ended. The bottle was taken back to the wine merchant's and refilled with wine, in readiness for a great adventure. This was nothing less than to make a balloon ascent with a famous aeronaut. A crowd of people had assembled to look on, a military band was engaged, and great excitement prevailed. The bottle looked on tranquilly from its basket, where it lay beside a rabbit, who was in a state of great perturbation, because it knew that it was going to be taken up on purpose to be thrown out of the car. The bottle knew nothing about ascents or descents. It only saw the balloon distend and become fuller and larger and more restless; the ropes were cut and away went balloon, rabbit, and bottle, amid the joyous strains of the band and the hurrahs of all the people. "This is an odd kind of sailing," thought the bottle; "but, at least, there seems no danger of a collision." Thousands of people looked up at the balloon; and one of the thousands was the old maid who had seen the illuminations. She stood at her garret window by the bird-cage; the cage had no water-glass in it then, but only a cup.

A myrtle was growing in a flower-pot which

stood on the window sill; the old maid put out her head to watch the balloon; she saw the rabbit come tumbling down from the car; she saw the aeronaut drink to the health of every one beneath him, and then hurl the bottle high in air. She little thought that it was the same bottle which she had seen flying high in the air before, in the days when she was a young and happy girl.

The flight was so sudden that the bottle had no time to think of what was happening to it. Never had it reached to such a height before; roofs and steeples lay far beneath it, men and women looked like little children.

The bottle now began its descent; not with a quiet despair, like the rabbit, but turning over and over in somersaults of delight and excitement. It felt quite young again, and it was half full of wine for a very few seconds. What a journey it was! The sun shone on it, the crowds of people gazed at it, the balloon was far away, the bottle was free as air. Down it crashed on a roof and broke in two; but that did not stop it; it rolled and fell into a courtyard, where it broke in countless pieces, but the neck lay there unbroken, as if it had been cut off with a glazier's diamond.

"I could make a good drinking glass for a birdcage out of this," said the man who picked it up; but he had neither bird nor cage, and it was hardly to be expected that he should buy a bird and cage just because he had found the bottle neck. Suddenly he bethought himself of the old maid who lived in the garret; it would be the very thing for her. And so it was that the bottle neck found itself in the garret, received a cork, and had what had been uppermost before turned undermost; a thing that often occurs in similar changes of circumstances. There it was, filled with water, and set up in the cage where the bird was singing joyously.

"It is easy for you to sing," said the bottle neck. It was a remarkable character now; it had made a balloon ascent; so much of its history was known to all around it. Now it hung in the cage listening to the bird, and the passers-by in the street below, while the old maid conversed with her visitor.

She was not speaking of the bottle neck, but of the myrtle in the window.

"You need not spend a dollar on your daughter's bridal wreath," she said, "I shall have a lovely bouquet to give you. Just see

how the myrtle thrives! It is a slip of the myrtle you gave me on the day after my betrothal: I was to gather my bridal wreath from it when the year was ended. Do you remember? That day never came; he, who was to be my guardian and husband, sleeps under the restless seas! The myrtle lived to be an old tree, and I took the last slip from it. Now it will come to the wedding feast after all, in your daughter's bridal wreath."

Tears stood in the old maid's eyes. She talked over the happy days gone by, and the betrothal in the wood. Old thoughts rose up within her; but the thought that she had close to her, in her own window, a token of that very time, the same bottle that flew up into the air and fired off its cork like a popgun for joy at her betrothal—that thought never occurred to her. Neither did the bottle neck recognize the old maid; it paid no attention to what she was saying for the very reason that it was thinking so much about her.

Children's Prattle.

THERE was a children's party at the rich merchant's; and all the little guests were the children of rich and distinguished people. The merchant was a scholarly man himself, he had taken a degree at his college, and when he went into business he prospered and grew very wealthy. His father had originally been a cattle dealer, an honest and industrious man, and he had given his son a first-rate education and a good start in life. The merchant was both clever and good-hearted; but people talked much less about his heart than about his money. Very aristocratic people visited at his house: well-born people, as they are called, clever people, those who were both well-born and clever, and those who were neither. This time it was a party of children who were met together, and there was plenty of children's prattle. Children, as we all know, are very outspoken; and among the rest there was one lovely little girl who had learned from the

servants to be extremely proud. Her parents were well-bred, sensible people; her father was a chamberlain, and she knew very well that that was something great.

"I am a chamberlain's daughter," she said; she might just as easily have been a chimneysweep's daughter, only it had happened otherwise. Then she told the other children that she was "well-born" and said that if people were not "well-born," they could never come to any good. It was no use their being clever or industrious, if they were not "well-born," they were nothing.

"And those whose names end in 'sen,'" she said, "they are never worth knowing; they are of no account at all. One must just put one's arms akimbo and make these '*sens*' keep their distance." And with that, she put her pretty little hands on each side of her waist and rounded her dimpled elbows. She was a pretty little girl.

But the merchant's little daughter was very angry; her father's name was Petersen, and she knew that it ended in "sen," so she said, angrily, "My father can buy a hundred pounds' worth of bonbons and throw them all among the children; can your father do that?"

"Yes; but my father," said the daughter of an author, "can put your father, and everybody's father, in the newspaper! My mother says that everybody is afraid of him, because he governs the newspaper."

And the little creature looked as proud as if she had been a real princess who was obliged to look proud.

But outside the door stood a poor boy looking in through the chink. He was so poor and mean that he dared not go into the room. He had been turning the spit for the cook in the kitchen, and she had allowed him to stand behind the door and look at the beautifully dressed children who were enjoying themselves in the drawing-room. It was a great treat for him.

"If I were only one of them!" he thought to himself. He listened to their conversation, and it made him very unhappy, and no wonder. His father and mother had not a penny to spare; they could not afford to buy a newspaper, much less could they write in one. And then came the worst of all: his father's name, and consequently his own name too, ended in "sen;" so that he was of no account; he could never come to any good. If

was very depressing! And yet he thought he was born as well as any one could be; he could not understand how it was possible to be born better.

That was what happened on that night.

Years passed away and turned the children into grown-up men and women.

A splendid house stood in the town, filled with all kinds of rare and costly treasures. People came to see it from far-distant lands. To which of all the children of whom we have been speaking did it belong? Oh, that is very easy to guess. No, it is not so easy. It belonged to the poor boy who stood outside the door; he had come to some good, although his name ended in "sen"—

THORWALDSEN.

And the three other children, the well-born, the rich, and the clever child? Well, the one had no reason to reproach the other. They all became what Nature meant them to be. As to what they said and thought when they were little, it was mere children's prattle.

IN the garden of Paradise a rose tree grew beneath the tree of knowledge. Among the roses a bird was born; its flight was like a sunbeam, its colours glorious, its song the sweetest music.

But when Eve gathered the forbidden fruit and she and Adam were driven out of Paradise, a spark fell from the angel's flaming sword and set the nest on fire. The bird

perished in the flames, but out of the glowing egg the new-born phœnix soared aloft, the sole bird of its kind in all the world. The saga says that its nest is built in Arabia, and that every hundred years it destroys itself by fire, and from its ashes falls the burning egg out of which the new phœnix springs to life.

The bird hovers around us all, bright in colour, glorious in song. When the mother sits by her child's cradle, it rests upon the infant's pillow, and its gleaming wings form a glory over the little head.

It flies through the lowly room of poverty, and fills it with sunlight and the scent of violets.

But the bird is not the phœnix of Arabia only: it flutters in the gleam of the northern lights, across the ice fields of Lapland, and among the pale flowers of the brief Greenland summer. Through the copper mines of Falun, through the English coal pits it flies, like a dusky moth, above the hymn-book in the pious workman's hands. It glides down the Ganges on the lotus blossom, and the eyes of the Hindoo maiden brighten at its coming.

Bird phœnix! bird of Paradise! sacred swan of song! do you not know it? It sat upon

the car of Thespis like a chattering raven, and flapped its black wings. Over Iceland's echoing harp it rose like a red-beaked swan; on Shakespeare's shoulder it lighted, like Odin's raven, and whispered, "Immortality!" It flew through Wartburg's knightly halls at the minstrels' feast.

Bird phœnix! It sang the "*Marseillaise*," and you kissed the feather that fell from its wings; it came to you in the glory of Paradise, and you turned, perchance, away to look at the sparrow strutting there with tinselled wings.

The bird of Paradise! Born anew every century; born in flames to die in flames again. Its image hangs in the halls of wealth, and wanders lonely in desolate byways: only a saga, "Bird phœnix in Arabia!"

At thy birth in Paradise beneath the tree of knowledge God gave thee thy true name—Poesy!